Meditations
UPON THE
PARABLE
OF THE
PRODIGAL SON.

THE
SECOND PART.

By *OBADIAH GREW*, D.D.

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The PUBLISHER to the Serious READER.

READER,

YOU have here the Second Part upon the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which goes through with it. This, as the former, is the substance of several Sermons preached to a plain and honest Auditory; and were therefore purposely suited, by the Reverend Author, not so much to the Learning of some few amongst them, as to the edification of them all. Yet the Reader will find the style, as not hard and cloudy, so neither light and indecorous; but proper and grave, becoming both the Subject and the Author. The Matter, all pure Divinity, naturally arising from the words of the Parable, and every where cleared with the suffrage of other parts of Holy Scripture; and some of the deepest points in Theology, with those learned strokes which have here and there slipt in, accommodated to the capacity of every man. In doing of which, he hath followed the Examples of many other Wise

Fathers of our Church, who in Parish-pulpits have always studied, not only what to say, but what not to say; that they might be throughly understood by those, to whom their Discourses were directed.

What is said of Conversion, Free Grace, and Merit, hath ever been very displeasing to some men. And no less the Gospel it self, which was proposed as a learned man well saith, Tanquam Lapis esset Lydius, ad quem Ingenia Sanabilia explorarentur. Those that will dispute, nothing shall suffice; but it is easie to satisfie them who are resolved to be honest, and humbly to submit their Scholastick Reason to the unsearchable Wisdom of God. In a word, Whoever, without prejudice, shall make tryal, will find the reading of this Book not a little to conduce, if a bad man, to make him good; and if never so good, to make him better.

MEDITATIONS
UPON THE
PARABLE
OF THE
PRODIGAL SON.
PART II.

CHAP. I.

Distributeth the Second part of the Parable (which describeth the Prodigals return) into its several Branches. Sheweth Divine Grace to be the spring of Conversion, and what man is to do in order to it.

HAving finished my Meditations on the first Part of the Parable, in which we have a Description of the State of a lost Sinner, to the 16 *vers.* I now come to the Second Part, or the Sinners return and coming into a State of Grace, described in the Prodigals coming to himself, and coming back to his Father, from the 17. *vers.* to part of the 20.

Ver. 17. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my Father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?*

18. *I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.*

19. *And am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired servants.*

20. *And he arose and came to his Father.*

In the 16. *vers.* this Prodigals condition was like the Hybernal Solstice, or the depth of Winter. In the 17. *verse* he begins his return towards Spring and Summer; the sap begins to rise from the root to the branches. *And when he came to himself, he said,* &c.

All men act the first part of this Prodigal: his leaving his Fathers house, going into a far Country, mispending his substance or Portion, his being reduced to very great straits, and his very sorry shifts therein. But few act the Second Part, his return to his Fathers house, his solemn Repentance. As but a few of those many *Jews* that went into captivity, returned back into their own Country. *I will take you one of a city, and two of a family or tribe, and I will bring you to Zion.* 'Tis said, *A remnant shall be saved. And there is a remnant according the election of grace.*

Jer. 3. 14.
Rom. 9. 27. and 11. 5.

Alas! how many Sinners dye in a far Country from God, in their natural condition, and never come to the happiness of this lost Son, in his return to his Fathers house!

This 17. *verse* enters us upon the Prodigals Repentance; here he begins to set his Face towards his Fathers house, with as melting a heart as the Children of *Israel* and *Judah* did theirs towards *Zion*, when they came out of *Babylon*.

Jer. 50. 5.

His behaviour here is like returning *Ephraims*; *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccostomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* There is much of this, in this Prodigals Repentance, and return to his Father.

Jer. 31. 18.

And now he begins to repent, he changes his name from a lost Son, to a Son that is found; from a dead Son, to a Son that

that is alive, verſ. 24. *This my ſon was dead, and is alive again; he was loſt, and is found.* So that his Father did by him, as the Lord did by his People returning from Captivity; he changed their name. *Thou ſhalt no more be termed, Forſaken,* Iſa. 62. 4. *but thou ſhalt be called,* Hephzibah, *the Lords delight.* And then this Prodigal might ſay ſome of Chriſts words of himſelf, *I am he that liveth, and was dead.* So remarkably was he Rev. 1. 18. raiſed, as it were from the dead, to a ſpiritual Life. Eph. 2. 2.

Now in the Prodigals return to his Fathers houſe, there are theſe particulaes obſervable.

1. His ſoliloquy or ſerious Conſideration with himſelf, in verſ. 17. *And when he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſervants of my Fathers have bread enough, and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger?*

2. His Reſolution in the 18. and 19. *verſes*; *I will ariſe and go to my father, and ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon; make me as one of thy hired ſervants.*

3. His Converſion, or its compleating Act, or the Execution of what he had reſolv'd upon, in the 20. *verſ. and he aroſe and came to his father,* &c.

1. His return began with adviſement with himſelf.

1. In General, *And when he came to himſelf.*

2. In two particulars. The conſideration of the plenty his Fathers Servants had; And his own ſcarcity in his diſtance from his Fathers Houſe, tho he was a Son. *How many hired ſervants of my father have bread enough, and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger?*

Now of this great point of the Prodigals Converſion, there will a Queſtion here fall in, fit to be anſwered, before I come directly to the Words of the Text; and the Queſtion is,

Queſt. How this loſt Son came to himſelf, and then to his Father? Whether was the riſe and ſpring of his Repentance from himſelf and his own will? or was it from the Will of God?

Anſ. Surely not from himſelf, and his own free-will; but it was of God, and his free Grace.

His ſtraits put him upon conſideration, and conſideration ſhewed him how irrationally he had acted; he had been led by his Luſts, and not his Reaſon, and his Conviction was the preparative to his Converſion.

2 Sam. 14. Now as *David* ſaid to the Woman of *Tekoa*, *Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?* Truly ſo, when we look upon this Luxurious mans Converſion, firſt to himſelf, and then to his Father; and his ingenuous, melting, and ſubmiſſive Behaviour herein; we may ſay, Is not the hand of God in all this? Pſal. 118. v. 23. Yes ſurely, *This was the Lords doing.*

God hath a ſecret work upon mens conſciences, before they come to themſelves; and when they do come to themſelves, and ſee their woful ſtate, that they grow not deſperate, like Jer. 2. thoſe *Jews* who ſaid, *There is no hope, no, for I have loved ſtrangers, and after them I will go.* A ſecret hand of God Act. 16. ſtops them, as *Paul* did the Jaylor, when upon that terrible breaking open of the Goal, he would have been a *ſelo de ſe*, a ſelf-murderer, as *Judas* was in his deſpair.

When the Lord hath given a Spirit of Conviction to a Sin- Dan. 5. ner, and ſet his Conſcience a trembling, (as he did *Belſhazzars* Joynts and Knees), and intends to ſave the Sinner; (for he ſaith not of every Sinner as of *Ephraim*, *He is joined to idols, let him alone*; or as it is in Rev. 22. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.*) I ſay, when God intends to ſave ſuch a Sinner, he ſends a hand to touch his terrified and trembling heart, Chap 10. and to bid him not to fear, as he did to *Daniel*. Doubtleſs, a loſt Sinners recovery is by a Divine Power, by *the finger of* Luke 11. 20. *God*, as our Saviours calls the Spirit. You may as well thruſt *compared with* Matth. 12. 28. Chriſt out of the Work of Redemption, as the Spirit out of Iſa. 63. 3. the work of Converſion. So that as Chriſt ſaid in the one, *I have trodden the winepreſs alone, and of the people there was none with me.* So may we ſay; yea, ſo ſaith the Scripture in the John 16. 8. other. *The Spirit convinceth of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment*; the Spirit alone.

As Chriſt in his birth, as the Son of man, was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt; ſo a ſinner in his New-birth, is conceived Matth. 1. 20. of the Holy Ghoſt: and he is therefore ſaid to be *begotten of God*, and *born of God*: and the Grace that is inſuſed in his Con- 1 John 3. 9. verſion, is called, *The ſeed of God.*

Men

Men are too close Prisoners to sin, to release themselves: *The Scripture hath concluded all under sin.* That is, the Law hath concluded all men under sin; hath clapt them up close Prisoners under Sin, and they can never get out, but upon the terms of Mercy, and in the way of Free-grace. The Sinner never gets his Liberty but by the Spirit. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* Gal. 3. 22. συγκλεισας. Rom. 11. 32. 2 Cor. 3. 17.

Every natural man is close Prisoner to Satan, as well as to Sin. *He leads them captive at his will.* And none but the Spirit of Christ can release a man in this case, as he did the Woman, *whom Satan had bound with an infirmity eighteen years.* Tho Satan be *the strong man armed*, yet the Spirit is stronger than he. Christ *binds Satan*, and delivers an humbled Sinner under the Spirit of Bondage, *into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.* Christ doth not only deliver from the guilt of sin, by his merit; but also from the Power of sin, by his Spirit. *The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* 2 Tim. 2. 26. Luke 13. 11. Luke 11. 21. Rev. 20. Rom. 8. 21. Rom. 8. 2.

The father hath committed all judgment to the Son. It is in Christs Power to dispose of the Conversion of Sinners; *The Son quickens whom he will.* John 5. 22. John 5. 21.

There is a Generation of men that cry, Divide the work of a sinners Conversion between God and man; as the Harlot cryed, *Divide the living child.* But what saith the Scripture? *Not of the will of man, but of God, is man born again.* The Spirit hath the power of renewing and sanctifying sinners. *Elect according to the foreknowledg of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* As when *Paul* fell upon *Eutcius*, he came to himself; and the Widows son, when the Prophet lay upon him. It is true, the *Act* of Conversion is ours, but the *Power* is Gods. As the Ax cuts the Wood, but the Power with which it doth it, is the mans that useth it. There is no less power required to the Being of the new Creature, than the old; and there was no power less than Gods in that. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Man by nature, is a proud Creature; he would *be as God:* He thinks he can, and will do much in his Conversion, and Obedience to God: As we see in those *Jews*, who said to *Moses*, *Go thou near, and hear all that the* 1 Kings 3. John 1. 13. 1 Pet. 1, 2. Acts 20. 10. 1 Kings 17. Heb. 11. 3. Gen. 3. Deut. 5. 27.

the Lord our God ſhall ſay, and ſpeak thou unto us all that the Lord our God ſhall ſpeak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. But what ſaith God? in the 29.*v.* *Oh that there were ſuch an heart in them!* or, who will give them ſuch an heart? The truth is, man neither can of himſelf, nor will of himſelf, turn to God. If he would, he cannot of himſelf. *Turn thou me,* Jer. 31. 18. *and I ſhall be turned.* And if he could, he would not; *They* Hoſ. 5. 4. *will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord.* No man is of himſelf willing to part with corrupt nature for Grace. God is long, oftentimes, in ſubduing a Sinners heart, before he takes it; as *David* was, before he could take the ſtrong Fort of 2 Sam. 5. the *Jebuſites.*

And let not men think their caſe the worſe, becauſe the Power of their Converſion is in Gods hands; for it is better ſo, than if it were in their own: For if it were in their own, What aſſurance have they of their wills? Do you think that mans will is more to be confided in now, in a ſtate of ſin, than it was in a ſtate of innocency? You cannot imagine it. When man had Power in his own hand, his Will undid him. This is much more every mans caſe now in a ſtate of ſin.

Queſt. What then ſhall the natural man do?

Anſ. He muſt obſerve Gods Invitations in the Scriptures, and believe them to be real, becauſe he ſwears to them, Ez. 33. 11. *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.* And obſerve Gods Convictions in thy Conſcience, and theſe will ſhew thee, that thou art a ſinner, a loſt ſinner, an impotent ſinner, and yet a recoverable ſinner. And now go John. 5. 1. to the Pool of *Betheſda*, wait on the ordinances of God; wait, I ſay, for the Angels troubling of the Waters, for the Spirits Gen. 1. breathing. He that moved upon the face of the deep, will happily move upon that Embrio of Repentance and Converſion that is in thee. And bewail to Jeſus Chriſt thy impotency to go into the Pool, and ſee if he do not as much for thee, as he did for that man, that had been Diſeaſed thirty eight years; John 5. 8. cure thee with a word of his mouth. And ſo much in Anſwer to this Queſtion, by the way.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Sheweth that ungodly men are in some sort distracted, or besides themselves. Particularly, from the first clause of the 17 Verse.

And when he came to himself ———

HE came to himself, as a man that hath been Drunk, or Mad, or in a Swound, or possessed of the Devil. Divines make Allusions to all these.

Now his coming to himself, is the first point of his return to God. So the Greek word for Repentance, μετάνοια, signifies a change of the mind, a mans returning to his right mind. The Prodigal first returns to himself, and then to God.

Now the Observations from these words, are two.

Doct. 1. That every man in a natural state, is besides himself.

Doct. 2. That a natural man must come to himself, before he can come to God.

First, That every man in his natural estate is besides himself. This Prodigal is the representative of all such men.

Natural men are not only out of their way, but out of their wits; they are departed from themselves and their reason, as well as from God. And therefore the Scriptures familiarly call sinners fools, *Psal.* 107. 17. *Fools, because of their transgressions and iniquities, are afflicted.* In the *Hebrew* it is, They do afflict themselves, *Sin against their own souls.* Num. 16. 38

God made man upright, a holy and a rational creature; but he hath intangled himself with his own fancies. A natural man is a man of strange fancies; his mind, like that of a Poet, is full of fictions; he acts not by right reason, but by his Fancy, his Will, and his Lusts. This

This Prodigal Son was in a far Country, far from himself, as well as from God: he acted not after his natural light, but after his Lusts; as the Man and Woman did, when they hearkend to the Serpent rather than to God.

Gen. 3.

Natural men are a sort of Lunaticks: so Jesus Christ speaks of his Crucifiers, *They know not what they do.* We say of mad men, *They know not what they do.*

Luke 23.

And as mad Mens actions are in our eyes, so are the actions of wicked men in Gods; he looks on them as besides themselves, distracted men. *David* did but feign himself mad, but wicked men are really mad, in the Scriptures esteem. *David* speaks of wicked sinners, that were *mad against him*, they carried themselves as void of all reason. And *Paul* said of himself, when a Pharisee, that he was *mad in persecuting the Saints.* And it is said of the Nations which drunk of *Babylons* Wine, that *they were mad.* And the spiritual man, that is, one that pretended to the spirit in vending of his own fictions, is by *Hosea* said to be *mad.* And the Preacher saith, That *madness is in the hearts of the sons of men whilst they live:* They are mad after their Lusts, the Lusts of the Flesh, or the Lusts of the Eye, or the Pride of Life. Thus we find *Balaam* was mad after honour and preferment, and silver and gold; therefore it is said, the Lord made the Ass *forbid the madness of the Prophet*: He was more irrational than the Ass.

1 Sam 21.
Psal. 102. 8.
Acts 26. 11.
Jer. 51. 7.
Hos. 9. 7.
Eccl. 9 3.
Num 22.
2 Pet. 2. 16

Now besides these expres Scriptures for the proof of the point; there are many scriptural illustrations of it, that do proclaim Natural and wicked men to be besides themselves.

As *first*, They are frequently likened to irrational Creatures; to Bulls, Wolves, Foxes, Dogs, Swine. *Beware of dogs. Cast not pearls before swine. Go tell that fox*, saith Christ of *Herod*; and to his Apostles, *Behold I send you forth, as sheep amongst wolves. Many bulls have compassed me about*, saith the Psalmist, And *man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.* God compared the *Jews, to a wild ass used to the wilderness.* Yea, natural men are likened to the most hurtful and poisonous Creatures. *The poyson of asps is under their lips*, and they are *like the deaf adder, who stoppeth his ears, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming*

Phil. 3. 2.
Matth. 7. 6.
Luke 13. 32.
Mat. 10. 16.
Psal. 22. 12.
Psal. 49 20.
Jer. 2. 24.
Psal. 58. 4.
Rom. 8. 13.

charming never so wisely. Natural men are ἀπειθεῖς, inpersuadable creatures; *non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris.* Tit. 16.

Though a man speak never so much reason to them, about their condition towards God, they are not moved, they will contradict reason it self: as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did all Christs reasons, they still held this conclusion, that they were *Abrahams* children, and that God was their father, and that they were never in bondage. Yea some wicked men are said to be more irrational then bruits. *The ox knoweth his owner,* Isa. 1. 3. *and the ass his masters crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* My people, that is, by profession and outward calling, and not by inward grace and holiness: *The Stork in the heavens, saith Jeremiah, knoweth her appointed times, and the* Jer. 8. 7. *turtle and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.* John 8.

Secondly, The Scriptures speak natural men to be creatures senseless of their dangerous estate; as men in some sicknesses are unsensible of their disease, or of the danger they are in of their lives; how many sick Souls think themselves well, as the *Laodiceans* did? *Thou sayest thou art rich, and encreased in goods,* Rev. 3. 17. *and hast need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked.* How confident were *Ahabs* false prophets, that they were not deluded? 1 Kings 22.

Men are naturally φίλαυτοι, self-lovers, so that they hardly believe any ill of themselves; they will rather question the word of God, than their own estate, as man did at first. 2 Tim. 3. 2. Gen. 3.

How many poor ignorant creatures think they have as good hearts as any, tho poor souls they are blinded by Satan, and *led captive by him at his will?* many a hypocrite thanks Gods *he is* Luke 18. *not as other men.* And the reason is, because they judge themselves by false notes, they estimate their godliness by things that may be in an ungodly man, as *Micah* did. *Now know I that* Judges 17. *the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my Priest.* Alas, outward priviledges, and common grace, save no man. *Paul* threw away all these, and fled to Christs righteousness for his Justification before God, and the satisfaction of his own conscience. And in a word, the heart of natural men is so *deceitful*, that it familiarly cheats them. It hides 2 Tim. 2. 26.

the evils that are in it, as *Rachel* did her Fathers gods.

Thirdly, Natural men are unreasonable creatures in their manner of sinning. For,

1. They ordinarily sin against knowledge, against the light of nature, against the light of reason: as the Apostle expresseth it, *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they that commit such things are worthy of death; not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.* Rom. 1. 32. Tho they know the word and law of God is against such things, and that hell and damnation is the reward of them; yet they will do such things, and approve and applaud those that do them: their minds, and judgments, and reasons are debauched, they change themselves into the very nature of beasts, have the hearts of beasts, as *Nebuchadnezzar* had. Dan. 4.

2. As natural men sin knowingly, so they sin willingly and presumptuously, in defiance of the law of God; both his commands, and his threatnings; as the man that broke the Sabbath, he did it presumptuously, with a high hand; so do wicked men commit most of their sins. *As for the word of the Lord that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hear it.* Numb. 15. Jer. 44. 16. I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. Deut. 29. 19. And,

3. They sin with greediness. *Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. They ran greedily after the errour of Balaam.* Eph. 4. 19. Judges 11. Yea they sin many times desperately and Atheistically. *There is no hope, no, but we have loved strangers, and after them we will go.* Jer. 2. 25. *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall die.* Isaiah 22. 13.

Fourthly, The Holy Ghost calls their pleasures and delights here, as they use them, meer madness; and so the Preacher found they were by experience: they are often accompanied with sorrow, and they always end in it. *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness. Belshazzars* trembling seized him in the midst of his Jollitry. And saith the Lord by the Prophet, *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, and compass your selves about with the sparks thereof; this shall ye have at my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.* Eccles. 2. 2. Pro. 14. 13. Dan. 5. Isa. 50.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Natural men want Wiſdom to conſider their latter end: *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end.* They have not that wiſdom and underſtanding to look before them; they look at preſent things, as irrational creatures do: *They ſee not afar off*; Death, and Judgment, Heaven and Hell; theſe are out of their ſight, and out of their mind. Many carnal men live as if they held the Soul to be mortal, as the *Epicurian* Philoſophers did, and as our preſent Atheiſts do; that when men die, there is an end of them. They think of man, as of beaſts, *That which befalleth the ſons of men, befalleth beaſts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth ſo dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: ſo that a man hath no prehemineneе above a beaſt.* And tho all natural men are not of this belief, as to mens Souls; yet moſt live after the rate of ſuch a belief.

Deut. 32. 29.

2 Pet. 1. 9.

Eccleſ. 3. 19.

Sixthly, The Scriptures prove natural men to be beſides themſelves, in their fooliſh thoughts and conceits of God; as if God were but a man like themſelves. *Thou thoughteſt that I was ſuch a one as thy ſelf.* Or but like thoſe idol gods, *Who are they amongſt all the gods of the nations that have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord ſhould deliver Jeruſalem out of my hand?* And we read how *Goliah defied the hoſt of the God of Iſrael.* And ſaith *David* of wicked men in his days, *He hath ſaid in his heart, God hath forgotten, he will never ſee it.* And in Pſal. 94. 5, 7. *They break in pecies thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage; yet they ſay, the Lord ſhall not ſee it, neither ſhall the God of Jacob regard it.* Men are naturally *vain in their imaginations* of God, *and their fooliſh hearts are darkned:* and ſo, *profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they become fools.* *Ariſtotle*, that great Secretary of nature, writes many abſurd things concernning God; as that he works not freely, but by a kind of neceſſity. So the *Gnoſtick* Heritecks in the Apoſtle *Pauls* time, that pretended to extraordinary knowledg in Divine Myſteries, yet were very ſots in their reaſonings about God, and the things of God. Thus the point is clear, that men in their natural ſtate are beſides themſelves.

Pſal. 50. 21.

Iſaiah 36. 20.

1 Sam. 17.

Pſal. 10. 11.

Rom. 1. 21, 22

Now the ground and reaſon of this, is the fall of man from his Innocency; he loſt his ſpiritual underſtanding and reaſon in the fall; it's true his eyes were opened when he had eaten, but it

Reaſ.

was only to see what he had done, to his shame and sorrow, as
Luke 16. 23. wicked mens eyes shall be opened in hell.

But as to his Divine knowledg of God, and likeness to God, and communion with him, his eyes that were open before he sinned, were now shut and closed; this opening of his eyes, was not a mercy, but a judgment. Only as one of *Jobs* messengers, that were left alive to tell of *Jobs* sad losses, to tell what man had lost by his fall: Man that did once know by experience his likeness to God, and his communion with God,
Rom. 1. 20. now hath no more knowledge left, than what will *leave him without excuse*. All men are born blind as to spiritual knowledg:
1 Cor 2. 14. they are but sottish in their thoughts of God. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are*
Eph. 4. 18. *spiritually discerned. The understandings of this sort of men are darkned, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.* They are more like beasts, than men, as man was first made. *They hear and understand not*: as a horse hears the sound of the trumpet, but understands not the excellency of the musick. They see and perceive not, may have the literal knowledge of the Scriptures, and yet know nothing of the spiritual sence and
Isaiah 6. 9. power of them. *Go tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

All men by nature have the *Spirit of slumber*, as the *Jews*
Rom. 11. 8. had; they have neither eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor hearts to understand to this day. *A reprobate mind*, is a
Rom. 1. 28. Judgment upon natural men for abusing the light of Nature:
Isa. 5. 22. An injudicious mind, a mind void of common Reason; *taking evil for good, and good for evil*; and with strong delusions to
2 Thes. 2. 11. believe lies. *For this cause, God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie:* As those that with confidence undertake to shew the Ass's tail whereon Christ rode into *Jerusalem*, and perform Divine Worship to it, and a thousand such fopperies, which many believe to be reallities. And tho many of the Jesuits confess their Legends to be lies; yet they tell us, they are meritorious lies, being to promote their Catholick cause.

Obj.

Obj. But here will come in an Objection from the words of Christ, Luk. 16 8. *The children of this world are wiser in their generations than the children of light.*

Anſ. They are wiſer in their kind, they are wiſer in the things of this World, than the Children of Light are; as wicked men commonly have more of this World than the godly, ſo they are more dextrous in the things of this Word. It ſuits with them better than the World to come. *Eſau* had rather have a meſs of Pottage, than the bleſſing.

But now as to things of another World, natural men are very fools. If they ſpeak of Grace, and Holineſs, and Communion with God; they can only ſay, *Sibboleth*; they cannot ſpeak of theſe things as having experience of them, and knowing them by proof.

The God of this World *blinds the minds* of the Children of this World, and he makes them wiſe to do evil. The Children of this World have a ſort of deviliſh wiſdom, ſo had the Magicians of *Egypt*, and the wiſe men in *Caldea*, and ſo had *Achitophel*. They are cunning to deceive their own Souls; but in ſpiritual things the Devil blinds them. *The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. They cannot receive the things of the ſpirit.* Owls and Bats, and Cats, can ſee better in the Night, than men; but men can ſee better in the day than theſe. And ſo, tho worldly men have more cunning and craft in graſping and managing the World, ſuch as it is, than the people of God generally have; yet they have a thouſand times more dexterity and experience in ſpiritual and heavenly affairs, than the wiſeſt of worldly men have. Theſe men have ſome ſins that are not the Devils ſins; as *the luſts of the fleſh*, Drunkenneſs, and Adultery, and Gluttony. And they have ſome ſins that are the Devils ſins and luſts: *Ye are of your father the devil, and his luſts ye will do*, and theſe are Pride, and Envy, and Revenge, and wicked Subtilty, theſe are his ſins, and he teacheth them the men of this World.

James 3. 15.
2 Sam. 16.
2 Cor. 4.
2 Cor. 2. 14.
John 8. 44.

And laſtly, The Children of light, (ſo the Saints are called, as the bleſſed Angels are Angels of light; the Saints are ſaid to be light in the Lord, and to be called out of darkneſs into marvellous light.) Now, I ſay, the Children of light have ſome

2 Cor. 11.
2 Pet. 2. 9.

ſome wiſdom in the things of this World; but the Children of this World have none in the things of the World to come. And beſides, that wiſdom that the people of God have in matters of this World, is of a more refined nature than is the wiſdom of other men; they have thoſe Promiſes relating to it, that other men have not: *A good man ſhall guide his affairs with diſcretion.* *God giveth to a man that is good in his ſight, wiſdom, and knowledg, and joy.* Yet as our Saviour ſaid, the Children of this World are wiſer in their Generations than the Children of light; they are uſually more ſubtil and active in earthly things, than the Children of Light are in heavenly things. And the reaſon is, becauſe the one have nothing within them to hinder them, but the other have a clog. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit.*

Pſalm 112. 5.
Eccleſ. 2. 26.
Gal. 5. 17.

I come now to ſome Application, and there are many Inferences from this Doctrine.

1. That natural men are ſtrangers to themſelves, as well as to God; they come not to themſelves, till their Converſion or Damnation. Many a natural mans eyes are not opened to ſee his own ſtate till after death; as you ſee in the rich man. They know not that they are *wretched, and miſerable, and blind, and naked*; they know not what they ſay, nor what they do, in things of Religion, and the Life to come. Alas, poor Creatures, they know not what they ſay, when they ſay, they hope to be ſaved by the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Chriſt. Mad Men and Women will talk at a ſtrange rate; they are this, and they have that; they are Princes, and have great inheritance; and ſo do natural men ſpeak and think.

Luke 16.
Rev. 3. 17.

2. This teacheth us not to marvel at the ſtrange thoughts that carnal men have of Gods people: look upon them as diſtracted men, and then you will not wonder at what they ſay, and do againſt the people of God. They *think it ſtrange, that you run not with them into the ſame exceſs of riot.* *Feſtus* thought *Paul* beſides himſelf; and the Captains thought the young Prophet to be a mad Fellow: *Wherefore came this fellow unto thee? He that departeth from evil, maketh himſelf a prey:* or, is accounted a mad man. Yea, many of the *Jews* ſaid of Chriſt, *he hath a devil, and is mad.*

1 Peter 4.
Acts 26. 24.
2 Kings 9. 11.
Iſaiah 59. 15.
John 10. 20.

The

The World will hate and perſecute you; *and they that kill* John 15.
you, will think that they do God ſervice. I ſay, wonder not John 16. 24.
at all this, becauſe they are the words and works of a ſort of Lunatick diſtracted and poſſeſſed People. You would pity a diſtracted Man or Woman, or one poſſeſſed of the Devil: So rather pity theſe Men and Women, for this is their caſe; and if ever God open their eyes, and change their hearts, they will own it, as *Paul* did; he confeſſed that he was *mad* Acts 26. 11.
in perſecuting the Church. That is obſervable in the book Chap. 5.
of Wiſdom, *We fools thought his life madneſs; this is he whom we ſometimes had in deriſion.*

3. The Doctrine ſerves for Exhortation to thoſe who are ſtill in this ſtate of Diſtraction, To ſeek to come out of it; to come to themſelves, as this loſt Son did.

But how ſhall any know they are not come to themſelves? I anſwer, If you be not come to God, you are not come to your ſelves; if you be ſtrangers to God, and the Life of God, you are certainly ſtrangers to your ſelves, and to your ſtate towards God.

But is a man beſides himſelf, capable of Exhortation and Counſel? Yes, tho he have not the reaſon of a Believer, yet 2 Theſ. 3. 2.
he hath the reaſon of a Man; and this God makes uſe of; *knowing the terror of the Lord, we perſwade men,* ſaith the Apo- 2 Cor. 5. 11.
ſtle. A convinced Conſcience can ſay, *Men and brethren, what* Acts 2. 37.
ſhall we do?

Whilſt you are ſtrangers to your ſelves, you will have ſtrange thoughts of your ſelves, and of the people of God, and ways of God, and of God himſelf, till Chriſt cures you of this Lunacy. The learned Philoſophers in Chriſts and the Apoſtles times, counted the Preaching of Chriſt crucified, *fooliſhneſs.* It was a Speech of one of them, *It is a fooliſh thing to conceit, that one man ſhall be ſaved by anothers Death.* What is it that makes men wiſe men, and what is it that makes men fools in Gods eſteem, and the Scriptures eſteem? It is the fear of the Lord that makes men wiſe: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom.* Pſal. 111.

And when men walk beſides the word, they are fools, and beſide themſelves: *They have rejected the Lord, and what wiſ-* Jer 8. 9.
dom is in them? None: When men walk at random, and not by rule, when they do not hedg in their ways by the Scrip-

tures,

Psal. 49. 13. 2 Sam. 13. ture, *This their way is their folly.* Thou shalt be *one of the fools in Israel,* said *Tamar* to *Amnon.* When men fulfil their own Lusts, they are fools in *Israel.* There is folly in all sin, and wickedness is madness. The best Reason lyeth in true Holiness. It is said of *Logic,* That it is reason refined; but Eccles. 7 25. it may be better said so of Godliness; It hath Angelical and Divine Reason in it.

Thus much for the first Doctrine, *That ungodly men are in some sort distracted and besides themselves.*

CHAP. III.

Sheweth, That a natural or ungodly man must come to himself, or his Conscience be throughly awaken'd, before he can come to God. From the same Clause of the 17. *Verse.*

And when he came to himself —

I Come now to the second Doctrine, *viz. That a natural man must come to himself, before he can come to God.*

Isa. 46. 8. Here it is said the Prodigal came to himself; and in the 18. v. he resolved to go to his Father. And in the 20. v. he did so. He came to himself, he returned to his right mind; so the Job 2. *Greek* word for repentance signifies, He returned to his heart. Jer. 2. 36. *Remember this, bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.* The *Hebrew* word signifies, *to heart.*

The heart of a natural man is a wandring thing; it is seldom or never at home, it goes *up and down compassing the earth,* as Satan said of himself. *Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way,* saith the Lord to *Judah?*

Natural

Natural men are ſtrangers at home, great ſtrangers to their ſpiritual condition; they know not themſelves, in reference to God; neither why they are in this world, nor what their ſtate is, as to the world to come.

They dream of theſe ſometimes, as men do of things in their ſleep; but they have no experience and proof of them. Actions and imployments in the World, and Countreys are ſearched into by them, and it may be the Bible too, as a Glaſs to look with at other things, but not to ſee themſelves and their condition in. *Who ſo looketh into the perfect law of liberty.* That is, James 1. 25. the Scriptures, but eſpecially the Goſpel: παρακύψας, that maketh diligent enquiry, as men ought to do. But alas! a natural mans heart, that little corner, is to himſelf *a Terra Incognita*, an unknowu and ſtrange countrey: natural men can give a better account almoſt of any thing in the World, than of their own hearts, and their eſtate towards God. Indeed in ſome reſpects natural men know themſelves too much, and can boaſt of their Peacock-feathers. *Knoweſt thou not*, ſaith *Pilate* to Jeſus, John 19. *that I have power to releaſe thee, or to crucifie thee?* and *Simon* Acts. 8. 9. *Magus* gave out that himſelf was *ſome great one*: If they have but a little better blood than other men, a better eſtate, better parts, and better eſteem in the world, this ſwells them, and puffs them up; as *Pauls* Revelations had done him, if not prevented. But come and ask theſe men about their hearts, what grace is there, or what ſins, or what temptations do aſſault them moſt, what their affections and thoughts are imployed moſt on; poſe them in theſe matters, and they can ſay little, they can ſpeak little good ſenſe here; or elſe their anſwers are abſurd, as thoſe of *Nicodemus* were to Chriſt, about regeneration: or doubtful and ambiguous, like the Heathen Oracles. John 3.

This reflexive knowledge of a mans ſelf, is not in faſhion amongſt any ſort of men except the ſeriouſly godly: if it were, men would have more checks and rebukes from themſelves, in their carnal walking; but the eye of their mind looks all outward, like the eye of their body. How many men know little of themſelves, and their ſtate towards God, whilſt they are in the world, and even when they are leaving it? They know not themſelves till they are out of this World: as an *Italian* Phyſician ſaid when dying, *I ſhall ſhortly know whether my Soul be immortal.* But now when this Proidgal came to himſelf, he

came to be acquainted with himself, and the condition he was in: *How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?*

And not only acquainted with the badness of his state past and present, but he is upon consideration, how it may be better, and that hopefully, because there was not only bread enough in his Fathers house, but also to spare, as you see by his discourse with himself.

Quest. But how did he come to himself? and wherein is this manifested?

Ans. First in general. The eye of his conscience was opened: for till conscience be awakened, a sinner comes not to a due consideration of himself. And the Devil keeps the eye of conscience in a sinner shut, as long as he can; he knows if conscience have an eye to see sin, it will have a tongue to speak against it. *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.* 2 Cor. 4.

The conscience of most unconverted sinners are no more sensible of their sinning, than *Lot* was of his dughters lying down and rising up. Observe it in *Judas*, tho Jesus told him that he would betray him, and withal pronounced *wo* to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; yet he boggled not, nor flincht at it till he had done his work. This is the reason that many wicked wretches have no bands in their death; but as it is said in *Job*, *They die wholly at ease and quiet: They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down into the grave.* They die easily, with as little trouble of mind as body. Not that this is every wicked mans case; *Jehoram* died upon the rack; and every wicked mans conscience is opened presently after death, and is upon the rack: *Be sure their sin will find them out*, here, or as soon as ever they come into another world. *Judas* his sin found him out, a little before he went out of this world, tho it stirred not at Christs words, *Wo be to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed*; yet after Christ was condemned, conscience was awakened out of its dead sleep. Gen. 19. Matt. 26. Psal. 73. 4. Ch. 21. 13. and 23. 2 Chro. 21. 15. Numb. 32.

The eye of the mind may be opened, when the eye of conscience is not; a man may be a convinced sinner, and yet not a conscience-troubled sinner. The *Pharisees*, as Christ told them, were

were not blind, the eye of their mind was opened, they John 9.
ſinned againſt the light; but the eye of conſcience was ſtill cloſed, they ſinned againſt Chriſt and their conſcience, but their conſcience did not trouble them for their ſins.

But now the eye of the Prodigals conſcience was opened when he came to himſelf, *I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight.*

Queſt. But may not a mans conſcience be opened, and yet he not come to himſelf?

Anſ. Yes, it was ſo with *Judas*; and the prodigals conſcience was awakened before, when he was pincht with famine, and ſtill beſides himſelf. All terrors of conſcience do not argue a Sinner to be come to himſelf. A whip may make a mad man roar, and yet not bring him to his right mind. We ſee this man in the Text, when he was pincht in a far Countrey, he hath not a thought of his return to his fathers houſe at firſt, but ſhifts and ſhirks for relief; the eye of conſcience all this while was but half opened; as a man that may be frighted much in his Dream, yet not be thoroughly awakened, but ſleep again.

But now when conſcience is awakened indeed, when the eye of conſcience is fully opened, not onely for a man to ſee and feel his ſin and miſery, but alſo to ſee that there is a remedy, and that there is hope of this remedy; now a ſinner is come to himſelf: and thus it was with the ſinner in the Text, *When he came to himſelf, he ſaid, how many hired ſervants of my fathers have bread enough and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger? I will ariſe and go to my father.* So that when a ſinner is come to himſelf, he falls upou ſerious conſideration of his loſt ſtate, with a reſolution to ſeek his recovery.

Queſt. But when a ſinner finds eaſe from terror of conſcience, is this an evidence that he is come to himſelf, and at peace with God?

Anſ. No, God reprieves many a man, that he is not reconciled to; a man may be freed from his preſent pangs and trouble of conſcience, and yet not be a jot further from hell. As a

man that goes upon bail, is not set at liberty, but must appear, and answer at the Law-day; so God may let a sinner meet with shifts and present ease from terror of conscience, and yet seal up his sins, and lay them up in store, as he did *Israels*, Deut. 32. 34. *Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up amongst my treasures*? his treasures of wrath, *Rom.* 2. 5. The Lord reprieved the children of *Israel* when he was casting them off, yet it was but till his day of Visitation. *Let me alone, saith he, that I may consume them*; but at *Moses*'s request and prayer, reprieves them, *And the Lord repented of the evil that he thought to do unto them.* Yet adds afterwards, *nevertheless in the day that I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.* So that a sinner may be reprieved, and not pardoned: many things come in with pardon, that a meer reprieved sinner, a sinner taken only off from the rack of conscience at present, hath not; what these things are, you see *Jer.* 31. There is a new covenant betwixt God and pardoned sinners. God puts his laws into their inward parts, and writes them in their hearts; the wills and minds of both meet. God will carry himself towards them as their God, and they towards him as his people, and have experimental familiarity with him. *I will be their God, and they shall be my people: for I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more.* Well then, in the first place, this prodigals coming to himself, put him upon consideration, in this 17. *Ver.* Secondly, upon resolution in the 18. and 19. *verses.* And Thirdly, his conversion follows in *ver.* 20. He came to himself by consideration; he came home to his father by conversion.

Deut. 32. 34.

Exod. 32. 10.

ver. 14.

ver. 34.

Jer. 31. 33, 34.

Due consideration of a mans state, is a preparative to conversion to God. *Let us search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord.* Yea, if a godly man wander from God, his way back is by solemn consideration; we see it in *Davids* case, *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy Testimonies.* Consideration is the work of the conscience, which being thoroughly opened, puts a man upon it. The eye of the mind knows many things which it considers not; it is the eye of the conscience by which a sinner considers and debates with himself about his state towards God: and such a conscience is a mercy. Conscience is the eye which looks into the inside of a man, whilst a man hath only the eye of his mind opened, he sees, and hears, and perceives not; it is the eye of conscience that sees things with consideration,

Lam. 3. 40.

Psa. 119. 59.

consideration, it makes a man ponder and debate things, and concern himself in them. Conscience is the faculty that makes application, a thing that men are shy of, and put it off as long as they can; as we see in *Felix*, *Go thy way for this time, I will hear thee when I have a convenient season.*

CHAP. IV.

Proceedeth to instance what the conscience of a returning sinner is awakened to consider. From the rest of the 17. Verse.

How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?

Quest. BUT what was the subject of the Prodigals consideration, when he came to himself?

Ans. Three things. What plenty his Fathers servants had, What want and misery he was in, And the Possibility of relief from his misery. There are variety of glosses upon these expressions, *my fathers hired servants*; and, *bread to spare.* But it seems most likely to me, that the former means the meanest of Gods people, godly men in the lowest condition: and by *bread to spare*, that God hath mercy for more sinners than yet he hath called to mercy.

So that the Prodigal, when he came to himself, and his right mind; First, he apprehended and considered the happy condition of the meanest of Gods children: *How many hired servants of my fathers house have bread enough?* Next, his own sinnful and miserable condition; *I perish with hunger.* And lastly, the posibility of finding mercy of God, for his recovery from his lost condition, there is in my Fathers house *bread to spare.*

First,

First, He apprehended and considered the happy state of the meanest of Gods people, *how many hired servants of my father have bread enough*? The Prodigal was now come to himself indeed, when he could so value the meanest condition of Gods people.

There is an admiration of the happy condition of the poorest of Gods people, in repenting sinners. They look not
1 Sam. 16. now on conditions by their outward appearance, as *Samuel* did on the Lords anointed, but they weigh conditions in the ballance of the Sanctuary; and say now, as they in Wisdom,
Chap. 5. 5. *We fools counted his life madness.* But when their eyes were opened, they called themselves the fools and the mad men.

The first appearance of grace in a convinced sinner, makes him wonder at the excellency, of a godly man, be he what he will, as to the lowness of his outward condition. As the convinced heathen, 1 Cor. 14. fell on his face and confessed that God was in the Church of a truth. Many unconverted sin-
Gen. 23. ners are convinced of this: *Thou art a mighty prince amongst us*, say the children of *Heth* to *Abraham*, a man that then had not a foot of the Land of *Canaan*. The Scripture sets such remarks upon them, that when a sinners eye is but opened to have a sight of them, he is struck into amazement: he sees
1 Cor. 1. 27. how *God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty.* The Divine Nature sparkles in them; they have a likeness to God in holiness; God may be seen in them.

2 Pet. 1. The least measure of grace is taking with God; the *some*
1 Cor. 14. *good thing* in *Jeroboams* Son, *Philadelphia's* little strength,
1 Kings 13. *Hezekia's* chatterings, *Nathaniels* sincerity. And when a sinners
Rev. 3. eyes are opened, he sees a glory in the meanest of Saints;
Isaiah 38. 13. as the Disciples did in Jesus Christ his humanity.
John 2.
John 1. 14. There is not the wickedest man in the world, though never so great, but when he begins to turn to God, he admires the happiness of the Saints, as *Balaam* did of *Israel.*
Numb. 24. 5. *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy dwellings, O Israel!*
Psal. 16. And still as more light comes in, they say as *David*, *All my delight is in the Saints.*

There-

Therefore there is no reason for the meanest of Gods people to dislike their condition. They may be tempted to it, as the Psalmist was, and calls himself a beast for it. They are of a Divine Extraction, and have a spiritual right to all things, tho not a civil; *all are yours*, 2 Cor. 3. And they have, or may have a mystical Possession of all things, when they are, as having nothing; which is a satisfying Possession. They have *the true riches*, and are Co-heirs with Christ. Their glory here, is within. How much soever you are outwardly Eclipsed; yet, if indeed you be the hired Servants of God, the meanest of Gods people; if you walk disconsolately, or discontentedly; It may be said to you, as *Jonadab* said to *Amnon*, *Why are you*, being the people of God, *so thin from day to day?*

Psal. 73. 22. 2 Cor. 6. Luke 16. Rom 8. Psal 45. 2 Sam. 13.

Quest. But how may it be known that Gods Servants have bread enough, that is, Grace and Comfort enough, when as many a Servant of God thinks and complains he hath little of either? For Grace, you must know, that Gods little Children have Grace sufficient to bring them into that Relation. The Disciples in their weak and raw state, had the root of the matter in them. 2*ly*. They have Grace enough to keep them from falling from Grace. Enough to deal with Corruption, and with Temptation. And enough to bring them to Glory: *We are kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation.*

John 2. 3, 9. Jam. 4. 6. 2 Cor. 12. 9. 2 Pet. 1. 5.

But to give a more distinct Answer.

1. It is often in their haste, that they say and think they have so little; as *David*, *Psal.* 31. 22. *I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight*: he confesseth it was in his haste, as when he said, *All men are liers*, the Prophets themselves. *I said, this is my infirmity*: *Elias was a man subject to like passions with us.* Gods people have strange thoughts of him, as well as themselves, in a temptation: *I remembred God, and was troubled.* There was some evil muttering within at God. Observe *Job*, *If I had called, and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice*: A strange expression! But of all in this case, *Jonah* is remarkable.

Psal 116. Psal. 77. 10. Jam. 5. Psal. 77 3. Chap. 9. 16. Jonah 4.

2. The

2. The meaneſt of Gods People have that which they know not: as *Jacob* ſaid, *God was in this place, and I knew it not.* Gen. 28. The Diſciples did not always know Jeſus, when he was with them; and it was *Mary Magdalens* Caſe too. *I taught Ephraim to go, taking him by the hand, but he knew not that I healed him.* John 20. Hoſ. 11. 3. The Pſalmiſt confeſſed, that God held him by his right hand, when he had other thoughts of him. Pſal 73. 22, 23.

3. They have that which they have not, as the Apoſtle ſaid, *As having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things*; when they have the leaſt, they may feel the leaſt want. When Chriſts Diſciples thought he was hungry, he told them, *He had meat to eat, that they knew not of.* 2 Cor. 6. John 4. 31, 32.

4. Many times thoſe of Gods Family have Proviſion enough, but have not ſtomacks to receive it, and digeſt it. God provides them Comfort, and they cannot take it. *My ſoul refuſed to be comforted.* If you feel a want of Grace, or of Peace, find not fault with God, it lieth at your own door. It may be you are not emptied enough of your ſelves: And, what can a full ſtomack receive? Were you poor in Spirit, had you room enough, God hath enough for you. You are not ſtraitned in God, but in your ſelves; the Prophets Oyl ceaſed not till the Womans Veſſels were full. Pſal 77. 2. 2 Cor. 6. 12. 2 Kings 4.

This then was the firſt Subject of the Prodigals Conſideration, when his Conſcience was opened; he ſaw a beauty in the Condition of the meaneſt Servants of God.

Secondly, When the Prodigal came to himſelf, he ſaw his own ſinful and miſerable condition, *and I periſh with hunger.* Every repenting ſinner paſſeth this Judgment upon himſelf. The Grace and Mercy of God will never be ſweet to a Sinner, till his own ſinful and wretched ſtate be bitter. Thus it was with this loſt Son, *I periſh with hunger.*

Now his Conſideration of his ſinful and wretched ſtate, was by Application, *I periſh with hunger*, and *I have ſinned*, v. 18. The Sinner in his repentance and return to God, muſt by an applying-work of Conſcience bring ſin, and the curſe to himſelf, as a Chyrurgeon layeth a ſmarting Plaiſter to the ſore for a Cure; whilſt a Sinner ſees Sin and Wrath in a Parable only, it comes not near himſelf, as in *Davids* caſe; but when the Conſcience acts *Nathans* part, *thou art the man*, then *Davids* 2 Sam. 12.

heart

heart is prickt. In the Law the Offender was to bring his Sin-offering himſelf, and lay his hand on it, to ſhew, he owned his guilt. It is not the bare knowing of Sin, and Wrath to be threatned, that humbles the Sinner; for then there would be more humbled Sinners than there are. But it is a mans applying Sin, and Wrath to himſelf. All the while *Paul* barely knew the Law, and the curſe of it, he had no trouble of Conſcience, but was a ſelf Juſticiary; but when Conſcience came to Application, and told him, Thou art the man concerned in ſin againſt the Law, and in the Curſes the Law pronounces againſt Sinners: Now ſaith *Paul*, *Sin revived, and I dyed.* Now *Paul* felt himſelf a ſinner, and under the deſert of wrath for ſin: And ſo this Prodigal ſaw his ſinful and miſerable eſtate thorowly, he ſaw there was but a ſtep between him and Death and Hell; *I periſh with hunger*, I am even dropping into Hell. As his Father looked on him as a loſt Son, ſo he looked on himſelf. Whatever God in his word ſaith of a ſinner in his ſinful ſtate, that the repenting Sinner ſaith of himſelf: he looks upon himſelf, as having been an Enemy and a Stranger to God, as well as to himſelf; he looks on his poor Soul as bordering on Hell. Repenting ſinners judg of themſelves, as Gods word jugdeth, utterly loſt in themſelves. Sinners muſt be loſt, or elſe they will be loſt; they muſt periſh, or elſe they will periſh. Men are commonly too ſhy in ſearching far into their ſinful and miſerable ſtate, leſt they ſhould deſpair. But the ſinner muſt come to ſuch deſpair as *Paul* ſpeaks of, *We deſpaired*——that is, of help in our ſelves. Thorough humiliation for ſin, empties a man of all ſelf-flattery, and ſelf-hope. Yet how many leſſen their Sin, becauſe they think the littleneſs of their ſins gives them hope of pardon. But men are quite out in this; for wherefore doth the Scripture aggravate Sin, but to teach the ſinner to do the like? Indeed there is a deſpair, that the greateſt Sinners muſt beware of, and that is, when they greaten ſin above the help of Chriſt, and above Gods Mercy. Aggravate ſin, but greaten Chriſt above it, and Mercy in God above it. You may as well ſay, there is no God, as no Hope; but yet a ſinner muſt come to a deſpair in himſelf; for whilſt there is any hope at home, he will never go to Chriſt, or look out for ſo much of Chriſt as he needs. Many a ſinner ſees a need of

2 Cor. 1. 8.

Christ, and yet not of all that Christ did to save sinners. Few come to this sense of their sinful state, as to say, *Truly, I see that Christ could have done no less to save me than he did: I see my sinful state needed his state of Humiliation, his Sufferings, his Death, his Resurrection, his Intercession, his Spirit.* This Prodigal saw the far Country, the Citizen, and all other to be vain and helpless; there was no relief but in his Fathers house. Oh do not think that any slight sense and feeling of Sin and Misery, will do repenting-work. And, what if some have overdone, even to despair? Must you therefore underdo? What if a man through want of heed or wilfulness, be drowned in a useful Pit of Water? Will you therefore not come near it? Shall not the *Jews* that were guilty of Christs death, be prickt at heart, because *Judas* dyed of despair? The deeper you are in godly sorrow for sin, the better; so that you keep an eye on Christ, and his affections towards humbled Sinners, and his Office for them.

The Soul may be lost, by a slighty Humiliation for Sin, as well as by none at all. A man may lose his Soul, by saving it. A Sinner must taste something of Hell, to keep him out of Hell. The Chyrurgeons knife is not to kill, but to lanch and search the Sore. Where one sinner hath perished with the sight of sin, thousands have been saved by it. Yet no sinner must ever let a sufficiency of Mercy in God to save him, be out of sight. Which leads us to the

Third Consideration of the Prodigal, when he came to himself, he apprehended a possibility of Mercy in God for his recovery, and the repair of his lost condition: *How many hired servants of my Fathers have bread enough, and to spare?* There is Mercy in God for more Sinners, than have yet obtained Mercy. God hath Grace enough, and to spare. *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* He can *abundantly pardon.* And Christ is *able to save to the utmost of* a Sinners need. *Paul* was a Persecutor, and a Blasphemer, *yet obtained mercy; that in the ages to come, God might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.* The Apostle speaks of superabundant Grace. *The grace of the Lord was exceeding abundant*, that pardoned a Persecutor, and a Blasphemer, and the chief of Sinners. God turns back none from Mercy, but

Rom 5.
Isa. 55. 7.
Heb. 7. 25.
2 Tim. 1. 13.
Eph. 2. 7.
2 Tim. 1. 14.

prou'd

proud Sinners; not *Manasseh*, when he was humbled; nor the *Jews* that put Christ to Death, when they were prickt at the heart. Christ put by only the proud Pharisees; the poor humbled Publicans and Harlots he received. There is no cause to give your selves for lost, who are humbled Sinners. Therefore, let no troubled Sinner pore with both eyes on his Sins; but with one look up to the Brazen Serpent. God would not have such a sight of sin in men, as disparageth his free Grace. He can make Scarlet sins white. The *Jews* displeased God, when they cryed, *We shall pine away in our sins.* It's but the pride of a mans heart, or his contemptible thoughts of God, to refuse Mercy. You dishonour God, when you make your sin to lessen his Grace. He hath *set open a fountain for sin, and for uncleanness.* Oh, let the bitterness of Sin make free Grace sweet, and the sweetness of Grace make Sin bitter; these two must be joined. Consideration of a mans sins and misery, and the apprehension of a possibility of mercy; they must not be divided. Consider them alone, and one begets despair, the other presumption; the Devil abuseth both; What God joins together, let not the Devil put asunder; *Jonah* had both these eyes, *I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look towards thy holy temple.* The single consideration of mercy makes a sinner to turn grace into wantonness, and men are cast away upon the soft sand of mercy, or as bees are drowned in honey; and the single consideration of sin and wrath, swallows up a Sinner with overmuch sorrow. Satan hath a snare here, he would make the Sinner sullen, and shut his eyes against the possibility of Mercy. Thus he brings *Saul* to the Swords point, and *Judas* to the halter. But the danger is more frequently on the other hand.

Zech. 13. 1.

Jonah 2. 4.

2 Cor. 2.

CHAP. V.

Maketh Application of the foregoing Doctrine.

THIS Doctrine is useful for tryal of your own case, by this of the Prodigals in his coming to himself.

And first, in the point of Consideration, which, as it is a distinguishing point betwixt rational and irrational creatures, for none but men and Angels are capable of it; so the Holy Ghost makes it a differencing point betwixt a godly and ungodly man. For the one sets his heart on his ways: *I consi-*
Psal. 119. 59. *dered my ways.* A godly mans great work lieth within doors, *He communes with his own heart,* Psal. 4. 4. He is never less alone, than when he is alone; because he is then frequently either talking with God, or his own heart, about his present or future state.

But carnal men have little or none of this imployment; *They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wick-*
Hos. 7. 2. *edness.* There is much Atheism in mens neglecting to consider their state and their ways: It signifies that they live very much *without God in the world. None considereth in his*
Eph. 2. 12. Isa. 44 19. *heart to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire, and shall I make the residue of it an abomination?* Wicked men are all upon their Lusts; they are led by them, and to them, without consideration, and much upon trust to their own ways, without consideration either before or after. *No man said,* what have I
Jer. 8. 6. done? *Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel.*

Sin will never be sin to a man, nor wrath be wrath, nor mercy be mercy, till he come to the most deep and serious consideration of these things. You know how frequently men have the Sun, and Moon, and Stars in their sight, without being affected with the excellency of those creatures, and without noting Gods eternal Power and Godhead in them. And why is it so? For want of considering them as *David* did,

When

When I consider thy heavens, the moon, and stars, what is man Psal. 8.
that thou art mindful of him. — And O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth? Consideration wrought much wonder in his heart at these creatures, and more at man; but most of God. Men read and hear from Sermon to Sermon, of the sinfulness of sin, and the terribleness of the wrath due to it, even eternal damnation it self: and so of the sweetness and excellency of grace; of great and precious promises; of the tender nature of God and of Christ towards self-bemoaning sinners, and how they are grieved at those who are stubborn and rebellious, as God was with the children of *Israel*, *Forty years long have I been grieved*--, and as Jesus Christ was with the Psal. 95.
Jews: *When he looked on them, he wept, and said, Oh that thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day.* — And yet because Luk. 19.
these things are not considered by men, they affect them not; or if they do, all wears off presently, as breath off of a new blade. It is an ill sign that a man is not yet come to himself, in order to his coming to God, if he put not himself upon the consideration of his estate towards God. For when men are come to themselves, they cannot but have serious thoughts both of their present and eternal condition. Now sin is sin with them, and grace is grace indeed.

A man cannot see his face in running-water, but in standing water he may: and so, transient thoughts about the things of Religion, make small impressions, or none on the heart, but stayed and serious reasonings and consultations do. And this consideration was prophecied of, to be a great work with men in the days of the *Messias*: *In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.* Christians, you should make consideration a great work, fill much of your time with it; that in you may be fulfilled this Scripture. Jer. 23. 20. Jer. 30. 24.

2. From the Prodigals considering the happiness of the meanest of Gods people, when he came to himself: We may infer, That the ways of God and godliness are the best ways. Not only the choice of Saints, *I have chosen the way of truth, I have chosen thy precepts.* But they have a desirablness in them, Psal. 119.
in the judgment also of returning sinners. Yea, the people of God have a witness in the consciences of natural men that their ways are good, and their state is good, yea the best: *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* Numb. 23 10.

As

As Jesus Christ had the witness of the Devils themselves that he was the Son of God. *We know thee who thou art, thou holy one of God.* So doth God make many wicked men his peoples
1 Sam. 24. 1. witnesses, that their state is the best, and happiest. *Thou art more righteous than I,* said *Saul* to *David.* And so the Pharisees
Act. 23. gave *Paul* an eminent testimony, *We find no evil in this man, but if a Spirit or an Angel have spoken to him, let us not fight against God.*

God makes ungodly men sometimes to have better thoughts of his people, than his people have of themselves: and many a poor Soul that is but looking towards God, as this Prodigal was, wisheth the state, which some despondent Christians dislike; as is seen in their fears, and doubts, and discontents. And those men that do not see a beauty in the meanest of
Isa. 53. 2 Gods holy ones, are blind, as the *Jews* were, *who could see no*
Rom. 11. *comliness in Christ, why they should desire him.*

Now by looking into this glass, a man may give more than a guess at his own estate. This was the first thing this Prodigal was convinced of when he came to himself, he apprehended the happiness of the poorest of Gods people, and that there was a beauty and a desirableness in them, and in their condition. *Make me as one of thy hired servants.*

2 Pet 1. Grace is a more excellent thing, than the whole creation besides; It is something of the Divine nature. As Philosophers say of a bird, or a fly, or a plant, that it is a more excellent creature than the Sun, in respect of its life; it is a living creature; so there is that excellency in grace, that is not in the highest natural or acquired parts, or in the greatest Estate, and Power, and Dignity in the world; grace makes a man more like to God, than all the other do. Yea, whereas parts,
Ephe. 4. 24. and Power, and Riches, and the like, make men exalt themselves above God, or against him; knowledge puffs up, and Power and Greatness hath made many great men think themselves gods; as *Pharaoh*, the King of *Assyria*, *Nebuchadnezzar*; and so *Herods* great parts made him willing to be called a God.
Acts 12. Grace, on the contrary, makes men exalt God, and abase themselves as the Prodigal at his first entrance into the state of grace. *I am not worthy to be called thy Son.*

3. When the Prodigal came to himself, he considered his own miserable condition: and men should prove themselves by this,

this, whether they are come to themſelves. Hath your natural condition, and the days wherein you were in your blood, coſt you affecting conſiderations? Grace is the ſame in all converts, repentance is not one thing in one man, and another thing in another; grace may be different in degree, but not in eſſence. There is no man that is come to himſelf, in order to his coming to God, but he is ſenſible, what a wretch he is, or hath been; and what a wretched condition he hath been in. There is ſence in grace, as well as in Nature; and there is nothing, more abhoring to Nature, than ſin is to Grace; *I abhor my ſelf.* Look how loath ſome a ſinner is to God, whilſt in his blood; ſo loath-ſome he is in his own eyes, when they are opened to ſee God and himſelf. A man can never know God mercifully by proof, till he knows himſelf miſerable. The *Iſraelitss* had not known the excellent Vertue of the braz n Serpent, had they not felt the ſtings of the fiery Serpents. It's a ſign that Satan ſtill keeps poſſeſſion, when you can not ſigh, and groan under the ſence of ſin, and wrath for ſin. When a man comes to himſelf, conſcience opens its eyes and its mouth too, and gives a man a true report of his wretched eſtate by nature.

Oh my Brethren, one word of conſcience, of an awakened conſcience, will do more good to make you feel your ſinful and wretched ſtate, than a thouſand words from any man. For conſcience is within men. It is not the higeſt buſling wind without the earth, that moves and ſhakes it; but wind that gets within, is that which makes earthquakes. Oh get a conſcience ſenſible of your ſinfulneſs and miſery by nature, and that will be a ſign to you, that you are returned, or returning to God, as this man in the text was.

Till a man have an awakened conſcience, though never ſo great a ſinner, yet all the thunder of the curſes of the law, even damnation it ſelf, is but powder-ſhot: and tho the cry of ſuch mens ſins be ſo loud as to go up to Heaven; yet they themſelves hear it not. Oh the dreadfulneſs of a ſleepy ſenſleſs conſcience, it is a certain evidence that a man is not come to himſelf, and therefore not to God. And yet how many think themſelves happy in ſuch a conſcience; in a quiet ſtill conſcience, that lets them ſin, and ſays nothing? And if conſcience awake, and begins to chide; it is as a continual dropping to them, as it is ſaid of the contentions of a wife. They think of ſuch a conſci-

ence,

Matt. 8. ence, as the Devils did of Christ, that it is their tormenter.

But, my Brethren, an awakened and feeling conscience, is a mercy, and not a judgment; and tho conscience give judgment against a mans self, yet it is not a condemning but preventing judgment. *If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged*; when a man hath entered his suit in a lower Court, happily it frees and excuses him from a higher.

1 Cor. 11. 31.

Oh, get the sensible feeling of your state, and condition towards God; you may have much appearing Religion in knowledg, and profession; and yet if you have not this sense of feeling, you are not come to your selves; you may have the sense of seeing, and yet not the sense of feeling in things of religion and godliness.

In Nature, the sense of feeling is a surer sign of life, than that of seeing, and so it is in Grace. Grace lies most in the feeling part of the Soul. Feeling the bitter of sin, and the sweet of Grace. *It is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* Many learned men, and men of great Light and Knowledg in Religion, are but as glass Windows, to give light unto others; but want the work of Religion on the affectionate part, for their own benefit.

Jer. 2. 19.
2 Pet. 2. 3.

Grace indeed begins in the mind, but stays not there, but goeth into the affections, and drenches into the heart, as the oyntment on *Arons* Head ran down to his Beard, and to the Skirts of his Garment: There is its principal, tho not its onely work. A child hath as much feeling as a man, tho not so much reason: and so a new convert hath as exquisite sence of the evil of sin, and misery of a sinful state, as the oldest Saint, tho he have not so much experience.

Quest. But how far is the sence of a mans sinful and miserable state necessary and a mercy?

Anſ. So far as its a help to a sinners Faith, and Repentance; but not further.

1. So

1. So far as it discovers a necessity of Christ, and drives the Sinner to him. The Apostle saith, That *Christ is the end of the Law.* Whilst a Sinner is under the Terrors and Bondage of the Law, he is not at the end of his work, or Gods work on him. No, Christ is the end of the Law; the Law is but Gods Officer, to lead Sinners to Christ. *The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* As the Law convinceth men of Sin and Wrath, so it teacheth them their use and need of Christ. Now when the deepest sense of Sin and Wrath, even a taste of Hell, of those Powers of the World to come, shall discover to a man his need of Christ, and drive him to Christ, this is a Mercy. Gal. 3 24.

2. So far as it is a help to repentance. Sin is not felt enough, till it be felt bitter. *It is an evil and bitter thing that ye have forsaken the Lord.* Sin and Wrath is not sufficiently felt, till they put the Sinner to cry out, as the ravished Damsel did in the Law; till the Sinner fall into self-bemoaning, as *Ephraim* did, *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*-- It's easie to say, there is such a thing as Sin, and to call our selves Sinners; but it's not so easie to feel our selves such. Sin deceives every man, till he come to himself; he makes nothing of it. Sin and Satan appear not in their own colours; they both transform themselves, Satan into an Angel of Light, Sin into something that may seem Grace. *Paul* bid men take heed of the *deceitfulness of sin*, from his own experience. *Sin deceived me*, saith *Paul*, that is, in his natural state; and when he came to himself, he found it had been so: Sin carried it so cunningly, that whilst *Paul* was in his natural state, he thought well of himself. *I was alive without the Law.* But when he came to himself, and the command came into his heart, and so into his Conscience, then *sin revived*, and he died; then he cryed out of the cheat that Sin had put upon him. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* So that sin is not felt enough, till it be felt to be bitter. And it's felt amiss too, if the Sinner be not driven to Christ by its bitterness. The sense of feeling in things of Religion, is that which discovers the state of men, whether they be come to themselves, and to God, or not. Jer. 2. 19. Jer. 31. 18. 2 Cor. 11. 14. Heb. 3. 13. Rom 7. 11.

4*ly*, The Prodigal when he came to himself, apprehended and considered the possibility of Mercy and Relief in his Fathers house, because there was *bread to spare*. And let convinced and humbled sinners lay hold on this, else Satan will make an advantage of a sinners sense of Sin and Wrath. Sense of sin, and apprehension of Mercy, make up the complexion of a sinners Conversion: as all colours are laid in black and white. Godly sorrow riseth from the sense of Mercy, as well as from the sense of sin. *We have trespassed against our God—— Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing*; and then they fall to Humiliation for their Sin. The most kindly sorrow for sin, is after the remission of it; and there is no kindly sorrow for sin, but where there is hope of pardon. Therefore in all extremities of Conscience, let this be your plank by which to get safe to Land.

Ezr. 10. 2.
Ezek. 16. 63.
Acts 27.

Hope of Mercy from God, is the Lanthorn that he setseut to Sea-beaten Consciences. It's true, the Childrens bread must not be snatcht by Dogs. Men may make the hopes of Mercy poyson to them; and so they do, if they turn the Grace of God into wantonness. But the Prodigal made it like the little oyl in the bottom of the Cruse, to revive his fainting spirits.

Beloved, The Name of God is thick set with encouragements to sensible Soul-afflicted Sinners, and his Promises to such are many. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden*—— And, *he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. You have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, saith the Lord.* And examples in the case are thick in Scripture, as Stars in the Firmament, *Manasseh*, *Mary Magdalen*, the Woman of *Samaria*, and *Paul*. If these obtained Mercy, Why not I? may the returning sinner safely say.

Exod. 34. 6.
Matth. 11. 28
John 6. 37.
Jer. 3. 1.

The apprehension of Mercy melted the Prodigal. It's easier to break a Stone upon a Pillow, than on the Ground. As the Law condemns all sin, so the Gospel pardons all that are pardonable, and those are all but one, the sin against the Holy Ghost; which may be committed under the Gospel, tho it was not under the Law, for ought we read, because there was not Light enough then, to sin this sin by. So that if thousands, and ten thousands of sinners have not their sins pardoned, it's not

not long of Gods Mercy, but the want of Repentance for Sin, and Faith in Jesus Christ. Christ cast out a Legion of Devils, as well as one. The Sea can drown an Ox, as easily as a Fly. *Adams* sin, the greatest of all sins, because it had the guilt of all in it, and the spring of all in it, yet found Mercy and Pardon. The greater the Disease, the more honour to the Physician is the Cure; the Chyrurgeon brags not of pulling out a tooth so much, as setting and healing a broken Bone. The Blood of Christ pardoned, and healed them that shed it. Acts 2.

But still remember, that sense of Sin and Wrath, and hope of Mercy, must help one another; men must be humbled for sin, for Christs sake; and this sorrow for sin, will never sting to Death. Take heed of making sorrow for sin, your Christ, that is, to make your Peace with God. If you could weep as much for sin, as all the sinners in the World together; yet that could not make your Peace with God. This is Christs Office; he is *our peacemaker*. Yet Christ comes not honourably into the Soul, but by sorrow for sin. It's the *bruised reed* that Christ will not *break*, and *the smoking flax* that he will not *quench*. Matth. 12. He is a Physician to sick Souls. Godly sorrow will never cast a sinner into despair: It's the setling of the Wrath of God by the Law, upon the Conscience, without an eye to the Gospel, that doth this. Many a sinner is broken with sin, and yet hardens himself against Mercy offered: and it is to be feared, it is so, because he may not have it in a way of Merit. The pride of mans heart is such, that he is hardly brought to receive a free pardon of sin, but would make God a recompence with his sorrow. Iron may be broken, and yet remain hard in pieces; and so a sinner may be broken with the sense of sin and wrath, and yet be hardened against Mercy, so was *Cain*. Gen. 4. Again, some men make an Idol of Mercy; and dance about it, as the *Israelites* did about the golden Calf. Exod. 32. Oh! take heed of this, God never intended his Mercy for an encouragement to Sin, but to the humbled sinner. Let the sense of Sin, and hope of Mercy, go hand in hand, as they did in this Prodigal.

If mercy put a bar to Humiliation for sin, it works not well; and if sense of sin work without an eye to Mercy, it doth the Devils work, and works the Devils end: for he himself in his misery, can have no eye to Mercy. If oil be poured upon a sound

leg, it all runs off; but if on a ſore, it falls into the ſore, and works a Cure. If mercy co-operate in godly ſorrow for ſin, as it did in *Mary Magdalen, Much was forgiven her, and ſhe wept much*, now Mercy works right, and ſorrow for ſin doth ſo too. Many will weep that they may be forgiven, as *Eſau* did; but the gracious tears are thoſe that come after forgiveneſs. Moſt of *Davids* tears for ſin, were ſhed after he knew he was pardoned.

Luke 7.
Gen. 27.
Heb 12.

Queſt. How ſhall a man know that the Apprehenſion and hope of Mercy in God for him, works as it ought to do?

Anſ. If the apprehenſion of Mercy make a man more quiet in ſinning, and leſs ſorrowful for ſin, Mercy is ill applyed. God will not caſt away his Mercy: *Give ſtrong drink to him that is ready to periſh, and wine to them that are of heavy hearts*, or bitter in Soul. And ſo doth God diſpoſe of Mercy to thoſe ſinners, that are loſt in themſelves, and that ſeek it againſt ſin, as well as againſt the guilt of it. And as for the degrees of ſorrow for ſin, we muſt know, that the Metal is melted enough, when it will run into the Mould: when your ſenſe of ſin and ſorrow for ſin, makes you caſt your ſelves into the Will of God, and makes you ſay as *Saul, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do*? You may conclude it is ſufficient. But you muſt take heed of abating the Fire too ſoon, leſt the heart grow too cold for receiving Gods impreſſions, which are, to be glad of Mercy, and to walk humbly in the Application of it, as *Paul* did, when he obtained Mercy; reputing himſelf *the chiefeſt of ſinners*, and *leſs than the leaſt of ſaints*.

Prov. 31. 6.
Acts 9.
2 Tim. 1. 15
Eph. 3. 8.

To cloſe, Let every man examine himſelf, whether he be come to himſelf, by theſe conſiderations of the Prodigals when he came to himſelf. Theſe are the ſureſt marks in the way of a mans Converſion to God; he conſiders the happy condition of the meaneſt of Gods people; he hath a deep ſenſe of his own wretched ſtate by nature, and he apprehends a poſſibility of Mercy and recovery in God. And as they are the ſureſt, ſo they are the moſt comfortable, becauſe they do

do not only accompany converſion, but follow after it, and always are in view. Ye cannot ſafely build upon your profeſſion in Religion, without theſe have a being in you. Tho you ſee great boughs on a Tree, it argues not that it lives; but if you ſee buds, it doth; your profeſſion of religion is inſignificant without theſe vital buds Thus much for the 17. Verſe.

CHAP. VI.

Sheweth, that in a ſinners return to God, conſideration produceth Reſolution, which is of great uſe. From the firſt Clauſe of the 18. *Verſe.*

I will ariſe, and go to my Father.

IN the former Verſe when the prodigal came to himſelf, he was upon conſideration. He comes next to Reſolution.

The converſion of a ſinner is gradual. Firſt, he conſidered, then reſolved, then returned. Converſion it ſelf is one inſtantaneous act; but the preparations to it, are by ſteps: as the making of a man in the womb is in that inſtant when the Soul is infuſed; but the preparation of the matter into which the Soul is infuſed, is a gradual work.

Now Reſolution, is the effect of an experienced and well collected judgment. Firſt he conſidered, and then reſolved. Reſolution in matters of Religion, and things of God, ſhould be rational and upon due conſideration. The prodigals reſolution to go to his Father, was upon conſideration, and good adviſement with himſelf.

Sinners ſhould conſider things ſo well, till they ſee the greateſt reaſon for their return to God, and ſo reſolve upon it. Thoſe Lepers reſolution to betake themſelves to the Hoſt of the *Aſſyrians*, was upon a rational debate. *If we go into the city, the famine is there, and we ſhall die; if* 2 Kings 7. Ephes. 1. 11.

we

we ſit ſtill here, we ſhall die alſo; let us fall to the hoſt of the Aſſyrians; if they ſave us alive, we ſhall live; and if they kill us, we ſhall but die. So Religion is not againſt reaſon, tho many things therein are above it; as the light of the Sun, is above that of a Candle. Some points in Religion are the objects both of faith and reaſon; as the immortality of the Soul, it is a Doctrine of faith, and it hath been alſo proved by great reaſon amongſt Philoſophers who had onely the light of nature. Faith doth not extinguiſh reaſon, but by ſnuffing it makes it burn brighter.

Theſe reſolutions in the text were of a man come to himſelf, to his ſound mind, and upon ſerious debate with himſelf. And this ſhews the folly of moſt mens actings in, and about Religion and the things of God, that it is without reaſon, and often againſt it. How many men ſtep into religious opinions, and perſwaſions, without any ſerious conſideration? We may ſee it eaſily in *Pagans*, *When they knew* Rom. 1 21. *God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkned.* They acted againſt their light and reaſon. And we may ſee this alſo in *Papiſts*, and in many ſectaries: And this is the reaſon why many are ſo unconſtant to themſelves, in the things of God, that many have returned back from Chriſtianity to Heatheniſm, and Judaiſm, and Popery; as the Apoſtle ſaith, *Many turned* 1 Tim 1 6. *aſide to vain janglings.* Hence it is, we have ſo many *Lots* Gen 19. Wives, that look back after they are come out of *Sodom*. 2 Tim. 4. And ſo many *Demas*'s that forſake *Paul*, and embrace this preſent World. It was upon this account that our Saviour Luk. 14. 28. ſpake that Parable, *Which of you intending to build a tower, ſits not down firſt and counteth the coſt, whether he have ſufficient to finiſh it? Leſt after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finiſh it, all that behold it, begin to mock him.*

Reſolution is neceſſary both in a ſinners returning to God, and in his abiding with God when returned.

Firſt in his return. Becauſe,

1. It it that which fortifies and defends the heart and mind againſt all temptations and diſcouragements in a mans way to God and godlineſs; ſuch a man ſhall have as great diſcouragements in his going to God, as *Iſrael* had by the ſpies, in going to *Canaan*. It may be he ſhall have relations hang upon

upon him, to diſſwade him; and inconveniencies to face him, and doubts and fears to puzzle him; now it is reſolution that muſt break through all.

2. Reſolution is needful to avoid thoſe ſhifts and falſe refuges that may offer themſelves: as the prodigal had many formerly; he had his Portion, a far countrey, and a citizen to joyn himſelf to. —— But he ſaw they were but as the cutting of the ſhooe, to give the toe a little eaſe, but cures not the corn. When a man beſigeth a ſtrong fort, he cuts off all relief from it: and ſo when God comes to take a ſinners heart, all other relief muſt be cut off.

The prodigal now ſaw there was but one door of hope, and that was his return to an abuſed Father and abuſed mercy: here he ventures himſelf upon, *who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to us.* He reſolves to reſign up himſelf; to his Fathers mercy, as *Eſther* ſaid in going into the King; *I will go in, and if I periſh, I periſh.* This was the way of thoſe repenting *Jews*, *Aſſhur ſhall not ſave us, neither will we ride upon horſes, nor ſay any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods: for with thee the fatherleſs findeth mercy.* The humble ſinner when deſtitute of all help and relief, findeth mercy in thee. Jona. 3. Eph. 2. Eſther 4. 16. Hoſ. 14. 3.

When ſinners are come to themſelves, they are humbled out of their ſhifts, as well as their ſins: they ſay to themſelves, as that King to the woman, *If God help thee not, who can?* They think, that God will ſooner forgive their ſins, than forget his own name and nature. *The Lord, the Lord God merciful.* The Pſalmiſt ſaid, it was his infirmity to put that queſtion, *Will the Lord be gracious no more?* 2 Kings 6. Exod. 34. 7. Pſalm. 77.

Secondly, Reſolution is neceſſary when a ſinner is come to God, that he may abide with him. He will meet with pull-backs, and divers tempting diverſions: he may have a dreamer that tells him things that will come to paſs, to withdraw him from God. The young Prophet was ſeduced by the old, with a pretence of revelation. Therefore *David* put on a reſolution to abide by the ways of God. *I have ſworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* And ſo did *Joſhua*; *as for me and my houſe, we will Serve the Lord.* What temptations had *Aſaph* to caſt off godlineſs it ſelf? Deut. 13. 1 Kings 13. Pſal. 119. Joſ. 24. 15. Pſal. 73.

You

You therefore who are humbled ſinners, and in your way to God, get to this reſolution, *I will ariſe and go to my father.* If you do not, it's likely you will be ſtopped in the way, and fall ſhort, as *Iſrael* did of *Canaan.* Reſolve, that the ſcorns you are like to have from neighbours, ſhall not check you in your way to God. It may be they will ſay, *Is Saul alſo amongſt the Prophets?* But reſolve not to be aſhamed of God, or godlineſs; ſome may ſuggeſt to thee, the many inconveniencies thou art like to meet with. But reſolve to hold on for all this; as *Luther*, when he began to read the Bible with affection, one of his fellow-Monks ſaid to him, *What is the matter that you read this book ſo much? have we not the ſum of all this in the Fathers?* But he went on in his reading; and it was to purpoſe. Nay, when thou art on thy way to God, let not thy ſins diſcourage thee, or turn thee back. God encourageth ſenſible ſinners, tho the greateſt: *Jer. 3. 1.* *Yet return unto me, ſaith the Lord.* And you that are come to God, reſolve to abide with him. Reſolution is one of the excellencies of Gods People, as to their wills and reſolutions they are in Heaven already. *Rom. 7.* To will is preſent with me; their wills are to be as free from ſin, as they ſhall be in glory. So that there is ſomething of a ſtate of glory in their reſolutions againſt all ſin, and their inclinations to be perfect in grace.

I will ariſe and go to my Father. But did his will prevent his Fathers? No, a ſinners will prevents not Gods: *I am found of them that ſought me not. Ye have not choſen me, but I have choſen you*: Chriſt was *ſent to ſeek and to ſave them that were loſt*: *Iſa. 65. 1.* *Joh. 15. 16.* when the prodigals Father *ſaw him a great way off, he ran to meet him.* The converſion of a relapſed Saint, begins not at himſelf, but God: when *Peter* was fallen, he roſe not again, till Jeſus *looked on him. The Lord turned and looked on Peter*; and then *Peter remembred his words, and went out, and wept bitterly.* *Luke 22.* Much more then, doth the converſion of a ſinner begin from God.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Sheweth, That repenting ſinners have encouragement to come to God. Are weary of their diſtance from him, and have leave now to call him Father. From the ſame Clauſe of the 18 *Verſe.*

I will ariſe, and go to my Father.

I Come now to ſpeak to the Particulars, wherein this Prodigals Reſolution doth conſiſt.

And, *Firſt*, we have the matter of it, which was to make his Addreſs to his Father. *I will ariſe, and go to my Father.*

Secondly, The manner of his Addreſs, ſet forth in two principal points. *Firſt*, In the humble Confeſſion of his Sin, with aggravation and ſelf-abaſement: *I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon. Secondly*, In his modeſt ſuit and deſire; *Make me as one of thy hired ſervants.*

1. The matter of his Reſolution, To make an humble Addreſs to his Father: *I will ariſe, and go to my father.*

The word (ariſe) is uſed in Scripture, ſometimes by way of encouragement. *Ariſe, walk through the land, for I will give it unto thee.* Gen 13. 17. The Prodigal apprehended encouragement to return to his abuſed and provoked Father. *I will ariſe.*

Doct. *A returning ſinner hath encouragement to come to God.* He is invited to it again, and again. God makes open Proclamation about it, *Go and proclaim theſe words towards the north,* (where they were captives) *and ſay, return thou backſliding Iſrael, ſaith the Lord.* Jer. 3. 12. And God hath anſwered all the ſinners objections. *Tho thou haſt played the harlot with many lovers, yet return to me, ſaith the Lord.* Jer 3. 1. *Tho your ſins were as ſcarlet;* Iſa. 1.

Isa. 55. *scarlet*; *Let the sinner return, and our God will have mercy, and will abundantly pardon*; *for my thoughts are not as your thoughts.* And to put the returning sinner above all doubts, the Lord takes his Oath, that he is well pleased with his return, and that he shall be welcome, and that if he do not return, it rests at his own door. Ezek. 33. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* And it was Christs first and last work, to promote a sinners Repentance and Return to God. It was his first Doctrine; Matth. 4 *Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* And one of his last charges to his Disciples, when he was to leave this World, Luke 24. 47. *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached amongst all nations.*

And it's a Priviledg, as well as a Duty, to return to God: Gods Invitations and Commands, makes it a Duty; and the possibility of it, makes it a Priviledg. Sinning Angels have none of these things; the Scripture gives not a word of encouragement to them: as it's said of *Esau*, in respect of his Fathers giving the blessing to *Jacob*, Heb. 12. *He found no place for repentance, tho he sought it with tears.* So fallen Angels have no place left for their repentance.

The Law allows no place for repentance to a sinner; it calls for satisfaction, and that's all. But there is a Gospel provided for lost sinners. 2 Cor. 5. *A word of reconciliation*, which the Devils have not; they were, and are under a law which they brake; but they have no Gospel, no word of Reconciliation preached unto them, but unto us there is. So that there is no reason for a sinners despair; the Gospel hath provided Mercy enough for a returning sinner, and full satisfaction to Divine Justice, in the Sufferings of Christ. The Devils work is to discourage a poor sinner, to have him swallowed up of sorrow: 2 Cor. 2. but the Scripture gives him encouragement.

The Conversion and Salvation of sinners, is a great Mystery; the greatest sinners are saved. The Gospel abhorreth despair. Despair is through the pride of the sinner. As the Devil is a despairing creature, so he is a proud creature. The best have need of Grace and Mercy: 1 Cor. 15. *By grace I am what I am*; and the worst may have Grace, Rom. 5. 20. if they refuse it not.

I.

I will arise, and go to my father. This implies he was now weary of his distance from him.

Doct. *A man is weary of sin, before he comes to Christ.* Matth. 11. 28.
A repenting sinner is weary of his former life, as *Rebeccah* said, as he hath wearied God himself also, in sinning; now sin is a burden he cannot bear; he feels that by himself, which God charged upon the *Jews*, *Thou hast wearied thy self in the greatness of thy way*, Isa. 57. and *with lies*. Oh, this is a blessed temper of Soul to be weary of a sinful state; for a man to be weary of those sins which he took pleasure in, while in a natural state. To be weary of a disposition to sin, as *Paul* was, and so was this returning Prodigal. Gen. 27. 46. Mal. 1. 17. Ezek. 24. Rom. 7.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do, saith *Saul*, when turned to God? I have enough of my own will, now Lord let me do thine: A man that is coming out of his natural state, is ashamed of himself, whem he remembers it, and loaths himself. *What fruit had ye then of those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* Pſal. 120. Acts 9. 6. Ezek. 36. Rom 6. 21.

I will arise, and go to my father. The Prodigal had enough of his far Country, and his Citizen of that Country, and now he wisheth himself with his Father again.

Doct. *When a sinner is come to himself, he would come to God.* He is now sensible of the misery of his distance from God.

Wicked and graceless men, like and love to be at a distance from God, to be from under his eye, *to live without God in the world.* But when a Sinner is come to himself, and is upon his return to God; when he is a convinced, humbled, sensible Sinner; he sees his error, and his distance from God is his greatest trouble. *Absolom* did not so much desire to see *Davids* face, as this returning Prodigal did to see his Fathers. Like those repenting *Jews*, *Lord, shew us thy face, and we shall be saved.* Distance from God is the vein of a Saints sorrow. *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* Can any of you live graciously or comfortably, without the Presence of God one day, or without desiring it? If you can, it's questionable whether you have Grace, or ever had it. The Pre- Eph. 2. 12. 2 Sam. 14. Pſal. 80. Pſal. 30. 7.

ſence of God is to the heart, as the nearneſs of the Sun is to nature; it revives things. There is a fulneſs of Joy in the preſence of God here, as well as in heaven, as far as our capacity can receive it here. The Pſalmiſt ſpeaks thoſe words extream ſenſibly, *It's good for me to draw nigh to God.* If the Preſence of God were not a very deſirable thing, why did *Moſes* ſpeak thus? *Lord, if thy preſence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*

Pſal. 73. 28.

Ex. 33. 15.

This ſhews us, that Grace began to work in the Prodigal, in that he diſliked his diſtance from God, and would be nigh him; he began to ſpeak like *David, O, when ſhall I come and appear in the preſence of God?* This will be the *Jews* great work at their Converſion. *They ſhall ſeek the Lord their God, and David their king in the latter days.* Men in their Converſion, become ſeekers after God. There is another kind of Diſpoſition and Spirit in ungodly and graceleſs men; they ſay in their hearts unto God, *depart from us.* Sometimes they ſay in their hearts, *there is no God, or would there were no God.* And they ſay in their works, *there is no God.* But theſe have enough of their diſtance from God at laſt: It's now their great ſin, and their puniſhment too, as we ſee in *Cain, Thou haſt driven me from thy preſence.* And it will be their Sentence of Condemnation at the day of Judgment: *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Go ye curſed.*

Pſal. 42. 2.

Hoſ. 3. 5.

Pſal 24. 6.

Job 21. 14.

Pſal. 14. 1.

Pſal. 36. 1.

Gen. 4.

Matth. 7. 23.

Matth. 25 41.

It will be their Hell; The greateſt part of Hell to the damned, will be a ſeparation from God: *Who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord.*

2 Theſ. 2. 9.

Oh it is an ill ſign when men can live without the Preſence of God. The Angels always behold his face, and the Saints would do ſo; and they are without Grace that would not. Let ſuch know that theſe words, *Depart from me,* have Fire and Brimſtone in them: It was a torment to *Saul,* to be caſt out of Gods Preſence, and ſo it was to *Cain.*

Matth. 18. 10.

I will ariſe, and go to my Father. Father is the ſweeteſt compellation of God, that a poor Sinner can uſe for his encouragment. This the returning *Jews* roled up and down in their mouths as a ſweet bit: *Doubtleſs thou art our father.* And when a poor Soul can come to ſay, *my Father*; in this the ſweetneſs of the Goſpel lieth. *I aſcend to my father, and your father,* ſaith our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

Iſa 63. 16.

John 20 17.

Queſt.

Queſt. But can a ſinner call God Father before he be converted, and in a ſtate of grace, and in Chriſt, and before he have the Spirit of Adoption? It is in Chriſt Jeſus that we are the children of God, by faith in him; and it is the Spirit of Adoption that teacheth us to cry, *Abba Father.* Gal. 3. 26. Gal. 4. 6.

Anſ. Tho a man cannot know himſelf to be a child of God, by the Spirit of Adoption, before converſion: yet if he be upon it, he may know God as a Father, and as having a tender diſpoſition towards ſuch as he is, if he be a ſenſible, ſelf-judging ſinner, and weary of his natural ſtate. This was the encouragement that God gave to returning *Ephraim*, *I am a Father to Iſrael.* And God manifeſts this diſpoſition of a Father toward ſinners, four ways. Jer. 31 9.

1. In his long-ſuffering towards them all the while they refuſed his offers of mercy: *He ſuffered their manners forty years. Many a time turned he away his anger from them.* The Lord makes ſinners to know him by his name, *Long-ſuffering.* God had no forbearance towards ſinning Angels, but towards thee he hath; had he not, thou mighteſt have been a *Cain* on earth, or a damned Wretch in Hell: but God hath waited to be gracious to thee. Act 13. 18. Pſal. 78. 38. Exod. 34. 6.

2. God ſhews a fatherly diſpoſition towards a ſinner, in his frequent tenders and offers of grace and mercy. *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. And If the wicked will turn from his ſins, all his tranſgreſſions that he hath committed ſhall not be mentioned to him*; and, *have I any pleaſure at all that the wicked ſhould die, and not that he ſhould return and live?* Iſa 30. 18. Iſa 55. 7. Eze. 18. 21.

3. God ſhews a fatherly diſpoſition, in bewailing and grieving at the obſtinacy and frowardneſs and wilfulneſs of thoſe ſinners that reject his offered mercy. *Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation*: And Jeſus wept over *Jeruſalem*, ſaying, *If thou hadſt known, even thou at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace.* Pſa. 95. 10. Luke 19. 41.

4. God

4. God shews the disposition of a Father in being greatly affected with sinners that begin to return, that have their mind on it. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, and crying, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned: is Ephraim my dear Son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him, I will surely have mercy on him.*

Jer. 31. 18, 20.

Quest. But are not wicked men the children of the Devil? So Christ called the wicked *Jews*; *Ye are of your father the Devil.* And are they not the seed of the Serpent?

John 8. 49. Gen. 3.

Ans. Whilst they are obstinately wicked, they may not call God their Father: God checkt the obstinate *Jews* for doing of it. *And yet wilt thou not from this time say unto me, My father, tho thou hast done evil things as thou couldest. But unto the wicked, saith God, what hast thou to do to take my name into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction?*

Jer. 3. 5. Psal. 50. 16.

But now for poor sinners that are affected with their sinful state, and desire to return to God, to these God hath a fatherly disposition. Yea more, He is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ in our nature, that he may be the Father of mercies unto such sinners. We see how the father of this Prodigal ran to meet his returning Son, when he saw him a far off. God is naturally inclined to mercy; mercy is natural to him, as light and heat are to the Sun. Yea, these are but qualities in the Sun; but mercy is Gods Essence.

Isa 49. 15. 2 Cor. 1. 3

There are two things God delights in, about returning sinners; the design of their conversion, and the accomplishment of it. God delights in pardoning sin to humble sinners. *Who is a God like unto thee, — because he delighteth in mercy.* *Davids* bowels did not yern more after *Absalom*, than Gods do after a relenting sinner. So that by this carriage of God towards sinners, especially convinced sinners, and such as are affected with their condition, though peradventure they be not yet throughly converted, and in a state of grace, and so have not yet the Spirit of Adoption; yet such sinners have reason to call God father: tho they may be ashamed to call them-

Micha. 7. 18.

themselves Sons, when they consider their former disobedience and base carriage towards him. This Prodigal calls his Father, *Father*; tho he confessed he was not worthy to be called his Son. God is the Father of the Angels; *Job* 1. 6. and the Father of *Adam*; and is called *the father of Spirits*, of all mens Souls. And he is as a Father, in tender disposition and inclination towards them; as *Joseph* said, *God hath made me a father to Pharaoh, in saving his land in the years of famine.* So doth God make himself a Father in his disposition to repenting sinners. Luke 3. 38. Heb. 12. 9. Gen. 45. 8.

Use. And this may be a comfort to those sinners that are in the way of conversion to a state of grace. Think on the Fatherly affections that are in God towards you, now you have an eye to him, and set your faces towards him, as the *Jews* did towards *Sion*, with weeping. Remember, that the Mercy-Seat was larger than the Law that had the curses in it; It covered the Ark in which the Law was kept. There is mercy with God to cover all thy sins. *Psalm* 130. 6. 1 *John* 2. 2. Jer. 50. 4, 5.

And when thou art come to God, and canst call him thy Father, by the spirit of Adoption; these three things will follow as thy new nature.

1. Imitation. Ephesians 5. 1. *Be ye followers of God as dear Children.*

2. Filial obedience, and dutifulness. 1 Pet. 1. 14. *As obedient children, not fashioning your selves after the former lusts.*

3. Dependance: *Take no thought*, no distracting thought, *what ye shall eat, — for your heavenly father knows that you have need of these things.* Matth. 6. 30.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Which sheweth, the deep sense and humility of a repenting sinner in his confession of sin. From the rest of the 18. *Verse, and part of the* 19*th.*

Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; And am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

I have done with the matter of the Prodigals Resolution, which was to make address to his Father.

I come now to the manner of his address, which begins with confession: *Father, I have sinned.* He doth not hide his sin as *Adam.* Nor excuse his sin as *Saul* did, in sparing *Agag.* Nor transfer it to Satan, as *Eve* did to the Serpent, and *Adam* to *Eve.* But chargeth himself, as *David* did in his numbering the people; tho Satan provoked him to it: and God left him in it, as a judgment to the people. Yet saith he, *I have sinned, and I have done wickedly*; and, *these sheep, what have they done?* Here was great ingenuity in this prodigal; *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.* I have sinned against Heaven, I have preferred a far Countrey, this evil World, before Heaven: as *Esau* did pottage before the birthright. I have sinned against the goodness of my Father in Heaven; he gave me a goodly portion, and I have mispent it against him. I have sinned against mercy and grace offered me often from Heaven; and against patience and long-suffering, that have been exercised towards me in heaven. So that *the cry of my sins is come up to heaven* as of the sins of *Sodom.* They are as *Absaloms*, which were in the *sight of the Sun.*

Gen. 3.

1 Chron 21.
2 Sam. 24 10.

Gen. 25. 33.

Gen. 18.
2 Sam. 16.

And before thee. In thy sight, as *David* said in his confession; which signifieth, impudence in sin. *Thou provokedst me to anger to my face*, saith the Lord to the *Jews*, who sinned as tho he saw not, or regarded not. *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thy self.* This prodigal confesseth his presumptuous

Psal. 51.
Isa. 65. 3.
Psal 94. 7.
Psal. 50. 21.

ſumptuous ſinning, that he ſinned to the very Face of God, as a daring Sinner, like him in *Deut.* 29. 19 who ſaid, *I ſhall have peace, tho I walk in the imagination of mine heart.*

And am no more worthy to be called thy ſon. I deſerve no favour at all; thou mayeſt juſtly caſt me off. *If thou ſay, I have no pleaſure in thee,* thou art righteous; becauſe *I am before thee in my treſpaſſes, and cannot ſtand before thee.* I deſerve not to have any Favour, or Mercy from Heaven. So that here is obſervable, Ezra 9. 15.

Firſt, The Prodigals ingenuous Confeſſion of Sin.
Secondly, His Aggravation of his Sins.
Thirdly, His Self-abaſing, and Self-judging.

Firſt, His ingenuous Confeſſion of ſin. Confeſſion of ſin accompanies the Converſion of a Sinner. It is not only his Duty, but his Genius. Sin is a ſore that muſt be opened; elſe the wound will feſter, as it did in *David, Whilſt I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old.* When Satan had tempted *David* to ſin, he then gagged his mouth from Confeſſion; put him upon ſherking for preſent eaſe, rather than upon Confeſſion for pardon. Thus did this Prodigal at firſt; when firſt troubled in Conſcience, he joyns himſelf to a Citizen; but now he is got into his right wits and way, he disburdens his Conſcience. Humble Confeſſion of ſin, is a vomit to the ſinners Conſcience, which brings up the filthineſs of it, that troubled and tormented him. A ſinner that comes to God with his heart, comes with ſin in his mouth: Oh, I have ſinned, *I have done foolishly, and leudly.* Pſal. 32. 3. Pſal. 106. 6.

Queſt. Is this ſuch a great matter to ſay, I have ſinned? *Pharoah* ſaid as much, *I have ſinned; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* And *Saul* did ſo, *I have ſinned, for I have tranſgreſſed the commandment of the Lord, and thy word.* And *Judas* did ſo, *I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed Innocent blood.* Exod. 9. 27. 1 Sam. 15. Matth. 4 27.

Anſw. It's true, theſe confeſſed Sin, as well as the Prodigal.

But *first*, Not to God; they were too Stout and Proud for this. *Pharoah* confeſſed Sin to *Moſes*, and *Saul* to *Samuel*, and *Judas* to the chief Prieſts and Elders. It was not modeſty that kept them from confeſſing their Sins to God; but the Pride of their hearts, that they would not abaſe themſelves therein before God as they ſhould. Indeed fear might be in it too, as when *Adam* had ſinned, then ſaith he, *I was afraid, and hid my ſelf*. But there was ſtoutneſs alſo; ſuch as was in thoſe *Jews*, when they ſaid, *What profit is it, that we have walked mournfully before the Lord*? This, God ſaid, was their ſtoutneſs.

Gen. 3. 7.

Mal. 3. 13, 14.

But this repenting Prodigal, goes to God himſelf, and confeſſeth his ſins, *Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee*: And this was the cut to his heart, that he had rebelled againſt his Father, a tender Father.

It was a Confeſſion of Sin, with a ſenſe of the evil and baſeneſs of it; and that ſin had made him a baſe wretched Creature. *I am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.* In his Confeſſion of Sin, he puts himſelf into the hands of Juſtice, before he caſts himſelf upon Mercy and Grace.

It was the terror and dread of God on their Souls, that made *Pharoah*, and *Saul*, and *Judas*, acknowledg their ſins; whereas it was the Apprehenſion of his ungrateful carriage towards God, his diſobedience and vile carriage to his Father, that put this repenting Prodigal upon Confeſſion of Sin. His Confeſſion of Sin, was a heart-affecting Confeſſion, like *Ephraims*. It was a ſelf-bemoaning, and a ſelf-judging Confeſſion. There is much difference betwixt one mans ſeeing, and feeling, and confeſſing Sin, and anothers. *Cain* did not ſee, and feel, and confeſs his Sin, as his Father *Adam* did after the Promiſe of Chriſt. He laid hold on the Promiſe of Chriſt when he conſidered, and confeſſed his Sin, tho a greater Sin than *Cains* was; but *Cain* did not ſo, he was deſperate in ſinning, and deſperate afterwards. *Adam*, he ſaid to God as *Moſes*, *Lord, this people have ſinned a great ſin, yet pardon them.* So, Lord, I have ſinned a great Sin, a ſin that hath brought all the World into Condemnation with my ſelf; yet there is hope of pardon, becauſe of the promiſed Seed.

Jer. 31. 18.

Gen. 3. 15.

Exodus 32.

So,

So *Saul* did not ſee and confeſs Sin as *David* did, with ſuch ſighs, and ſelf-judgings. *Saul* might have greater terrour of Conſcience than *David*; and *Cain*, than *Adam*; and *Judas*; than *Peter*; but theſe had more tenderneſs of Conſcience, ſuch Soul-meltings as *Mary Magdalen* had, ſhe came ſorrowing to Chriſt; whereas the rich man went away ſorrowful. Thoſe confeſſed ſin as it concerned themſelves; theſe, as it concerned God, and had been done againſt him. Thoſe had more horror of Conſcience for ſin; theſe, more ſhame and ingenuity. *Cain* was not ſo aſhamed of ſin, as *Adam* was, tho he had more horror of Conſcience. A man is never aſhamed of ſin, till he apprehend and conſider ſin as an injury to God, as well as himſelf; till he ſee his ſins to be a grief to God, as *Iſraels* were; *Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation.* This Prodigal knew and confeſſed, he had been a great grief to his Father, and this made him aſhamed to own himſelf as a Son. This Confeſſion of Sin with ſhame, is proper to all repenting Sinners, *O God, I am aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my face to thee my God.* So *Daniel*, *O Lord, to us belongeth confuſion of face.* This is the diſpoſition that God hath ſaid, will be in true Penitents: *That thou mayeſt be confounded, and never open thy mouth*; that is, in thine own Juſtification, *becauſe of thy ſhame.*

Luke 7. Matth. 19. Pſal. 95. Ez. 9 6. Chap. 9. Ezek. 16. 63

Queſt. But is not this too general a Confeſſion of Sin? It's ordinary for wicked men to confeſs ſin in general, and themſelves to be Sinners.

Anſ. This general Confeſſion had abundance of particulars in it; there was a great deal of matter in a few words. Doubtleſs, tho this repenting Prodigal had not all his ſins in his mouth at once; yet he had them all upon his heart, to bewail them. He that feels what he ſaith, when he ſaith as he did here, I have ſinned; will not exclude any particular ſin out of confeſſion. There is a diſpoſition in ſuch a man, to confeſs all ſins, and more than all that are within his own knowledg. As *David* did the ſinfulneſs of his nature, and the ſins of his youth; and as this Prodigal did the ſins of his Relation: *Father, I have ſinned before thee*; and his ſins againſt Mercy and Grace: *I have ſinned againſt Heaven.* And *David* confeſſed

Pſal. 51. 5. Pſal. 25.

feſſed ſins that he knew not ſecret faults, *O cleanſe thou me from*
Pſal. 19. 12. *ſecret ſins.* Many ſay and confeſs to God, that they are ſinners; and yet know not, nor feel what it is to ſin; they content themſelves with an implicit confeſſion of ſin, as they do with an implicit Faith. Many that confeſs their ſins in general, forget particulars; as *Nebuchadnezzar* dreamed, but forgot the particulars of his dream. It's ſaid of *Bellarmine*, the great Champion for Auricular Confeſſion, that when on his Death-bed he could not remember any particular ſins to confeſs; at length he thought only on ſome trivial matters of his Youth; ſo ignorant was this learned man of his own Heart and Life. It's ſtrange to ſee how men will be culpable in generals, and innocent in particulars; as thoſe *Jews*, when
Jer. 2 34. God had charged them with particular ſins of a high nature,
Ver. 31, 32. as forgetting God, and ſlighting God; yet they took themſelves to be innocent. And ſo in the 2. and 3. of *Mal.* thoſe *Jews* could not be brought to own their particular ſins that God charged them with.

But the Prodigals general Expreſſions were full of meaning, and there were many particular ſins included in them; his leaving his Fathers houſe, going into a far Country, miſpending his portion, trying all ſhifts before he would have thoughts of returning to his Fathers houſe.

God doth not uſually ſet a mans ſins before him at his Converſion all together, leſt he ſhould be ſwallowed up of over-
2 Cor. 2. much ſorrow, as *Paul* ſaith of the inceſtuous perſon; but he doth it by parcels, as the Sinner may bear them without deſpair. But ſtill, as God convinceth of any, the Sinner makes Confeſſion of them, a heart-affecting, ſelf-bemoaning, and ſelf-judging Confeſſion, as the Prodigal did here: *Father, I have ſinned.* And therefore,

Secondly, He aggravates his Sins in the Confeſſion of them. *Father I have ſinned againſt heaven*; the cry of my ſins are come up to Heaven. And there is reaſon for our aggravating ſin, in our Confeſſions of it.

Firſt, Becauſe of the perſon we ſin againſt: *Father, I have ſinned before thee.* Our ſins are againſt a gracious God, and a patient God; a God that hath made us, and bought us, and re-made us; ſo that we are his, over and over.

Sin

Sin ſtrikes at the very Being of God; it's contrary to his holy Nature and Laws: It makes the Sinner walk contrary to God. Holineſs is Gods Nature, his Name is Holy; and Sin is the Devils Nature, and makes Sinners like the Devil. *Ye are of your father the devil, and his luſts ye will do.* Iſa 57. 15. John 8. 44.

Again, becauſe of the extenſiveneſs of the guilt of Sin. Men that ſin, now, in their ſinning may be guilty of all the ſins from the beginning of the World, as the *Jews* were, by Chriſts charge, when he was here upon Earth: he charged upon that Generation the blood of righteous *Abel*, and ſo of all the Prophets till that time; and this may be a great Aggravation of ſin, in our Confeſſion of it. And God himſelf doth aggravate mens ſins, when he ſpeaks of them, even *Davids*, *I anointed thee king over Iſrael, and delivered thee from the hand of Saul*, &c. *Wherefore haſt thou deſpiſed the commandment of the Lord?* And ſo *Saul's* ſin, *When thou waſt little in thine own eyes, waſt thou not made head of the tribes of Iſrael?* And by this God teacheth us to aggravate our ſins in our Confeſſion of them, as the Prodigal did. Matth. 23. 2 Sam 12. 1 Sam 15. 17.

Thirdly, He confeſſeth his Sins with much ſelf-abaſing. *I am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.* As *Abigail* ſaid to *David*, when he offered to take her to Wife, *She bowed her ſelf on her face to the ground, and ſaid, Behold, let thine handmaid be a ſervant to waſh the feet of the ſervants of my Lord.* 1 Sam. 25.

A ſerious confeſſing of ſin, abaſeth man, and exalteth God. *Paul* in his confeſſion, advanced Gods free and ſuper-abounding Grace, and made himſelf the vileſt of Sinners. When *Joſhua* bad *Achan* confeſs his ſin, he added, *and give glory to God.* How? In owning the Juſtice of God in his puniſhment, and in glorifying his holineſs, in that *he cannot endure to look on iniquity.* And the true Penitent alſo glorifies the Mercy of God, who upon ſincere confeſſion, will pardon, 1 *Joh.* 1. 9. And as confeſſion of ſin exalts God, ſo it abaſes man. A man muſt abaſe himſelf, and lay himſelf in the duſt, as *Job* did, *Wherefore I abhor my ſelf in duſt and aſhes*, Job 42. *Behold, I am vile: once have I ſpoken, but I will not anſwer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further.* *Jacob* abaſed himſelf, when he confeſſed the Mercies of God to him: *O God, I am leſs than* 1 Tim. 1. 14, 15. Joſhua 7. Hab. 1. Job 40.

tha

the least of all the mercy, and all the truth, that thou hast shewed me. And when *Israel* were come into *Canaan*, they were to own and acknowledg God in it, with laying themselves low. They were to say before the Lord, *An Assyrian, ready to perish, was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation great, mighty, and populous.* Now much more must men lay themselves low in confessing their Sins. The end of confession of Sin, as to us, is to bring us to a holy shame and confusion of face. *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face. Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and loath your selves.* There is need of taking man off from conceit of merit, in confession of Sin, as tho pardon and forgivnes was now his due. Whereas, alas, Confession of Sin doth not satisfie the Justice of God. It is *for his name sake*, that he pardons Sinners. And if men have pardon upon confession, it is by verture of promise, and not desert; for we Sin again, after we have confessed our Sins. So that this returning Prodigal did much abase himself, when he confessed his Sins to his Father. He acknowledged he had lost the Privileg of a Child, both as to Affection and Provision; and if he might be but a Servant, but a hired Servant in his Fathers back-houses, but in the outward Court, but a *Doorkeeper*, as *David* said, he should think it above his desert.

Dan. 9. 8. Ezek. 20.

Psal. 84. 10.

CHAP. IX.

Giveth the Reasons of a penitent Sinners humble Confession of Sin, with the Application.

WE have seen that the confession of Sin, accompanies the Conversion of a Sinner. That this confession of Sin in converts is with much Aggravation of it, and with much self-abasing. I now come to the Reasons of all three.

First, Why repenting Sinners are Confessors of Sin.

And 1. there is a Spirit within them that constrains them to it, as *Elihu* said, They are full of matter, and the Spirit within

Job 32.

in them conſtraineth them: they are ſick of ſin, and their conſciences are overcharged with it, they are like a ſurfeited ſtomach; a man cannot have eaſe till he have got up the offending matter. *David* was in great torment of ſoul, till he confeſſed his great ſin; *Whilſt I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day.* It's ſtrange that ſuch a holy man as *David ſhould be ſo like Adam* when he had ſinned, as to think to hide his tranſgreſſion from God; but the temptation preſſed ſore upon him for a ſeaſon; and whilſt it was ſo, his conſcience was upon the rack, as it is ſet out by the metaphor of his bones waxing old. But when he came to God with a ſincere and ſerious confeſſion of his ſin, then he had eaſe. *I ſaid, I will confeſs my tranſgreſſion to the Lord, and thou forgaveſt the iniquity of my ſin.* Pſal. 32. Pſal. 32. 5.

2*ly*. Repenting ſinners eyes are opened to ſee how, in their natural ſtate, they have diſhonoured and ſlighted God. For ſin is a ſlighting of God. In the firſt ſin that ever was acted by man, God was ſlighted much. His word was rejected. Now converts, in the confeſſion of their ſins, give glory to God: as *Joſhua* ſaid to *Achan*, *My ſon, give thou glory to the God of Iſrael, and make confeſſion of thy ſin.* Gen 3. Joſ. 7. 19.

In an ingenuous and ſincere confeſſion of ſin, a ſinner gives glory to many of Gods Attributes. As to his Omniſciency; owning that none of his ſins are a ſecret to him: as *Moſes* ſaid, *Pſal.* 90. 8. and *David*, *Pſal.* 51. 4. Confeſſion of ſin is not to inform God, but to humble the ſinner before God, in whoſe ſight he ſinned all his ſins; as the prodigal ſaid, *Father I have ſinned before thee*; whilſt thou haſt looked on, *to thy very face.* And ſuch confeſſion of ſin owns the Juſtice of God, if he ſhould have damned the ſinner: Thus did *David* in his confeſſion: *That thou mayeſt be juſtified when thou ſpeakeſt, and be clear when thou judgeſt.* So *Daniel*, in the confeſſion of his ſin, and the ſin of his people: *To thee belongeth righteouſneſs, but to us confuſion of face.* And it glorifieth his patience, that he hath born and ſtriven with ſuch ſinners ſo long, and not preſently condemned and damned them, as well as he did the Angels that ſinned. And his mercy and free grace, that hath ſtopt ſuch a poor ſinner in his way to hell. And the holineſs of God, that he cannot bear ſin, but it's the thing, the onely thing that he hates, *Hab.* 1. 13. Iſa. 65. 3. Pſal. 51. 4. Dan 9. 7.

Secondly.

Secondly. Why do repenting ſinners aggravate their ſins in the confeſſion of them? 1*ſt.* Becauſe they now feel ſin to be out of meaſure ſinful. In their ſtate of ſin, ſin deceived them; they were under the deceitfulneſs of ſin, which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of *Heb.* 3. Their luſts were deceitful luſts. Sin had a diſguiſe, and transformed it ſelf into a pleaſing ſhape, as Satan doth. But now their eyes are opened, they ſee ſin in its own colours: they ſee ſin is an ugly thing, and that it turns a man into the ſhape of a Devil: *one of you is a Devil*, ſaith Chriſt. And returning ſinners feel ſin a heavy thing; now conſcience hath its feeling, which it wanted before, when all ſin was light. They then choſe the greateſt ſin, before the leaſt affliction: but now, the greateſt affliction, is lighter than the leaſt ſin. *Paul* could bear any affliction, and called it light; but when he feels the law in his members, warring againſt the law of his mind; he cries out, *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me?* And though Jeſus Chriſt was willing to ſuffer any ſorrow from man, or from God himſelf, to ſave ſinners: yet he would not have committed one ſin, to have ſaved all the ſinners in the world. So that repenting ſinners ſee and feel ſo much evil in ſin, as makes them in the confeſſion of their ſins, to aggravate them very much.

Eph 4 22.
2 Cor. 11 14.
John 6. 70.
Eph. 4. 19.
2 Cor. 4. 17.
Rom. 7. 24.

2*ly.* The nature of the particular ſins they have lived in, puts them upon aggravating of ſin. Now they ſee how they have *ſold* themſelves *to* their luſts to *work wickedneſs*, as *Ahab* did: and how they have given themſelves over *to ſin with greedineſs*. How they have acted over the Devils ſin, and done *his luſts*.

1 King 21.
Eph. 4. 19.
John 8. 44.

Thirdly, The reaſon why repenting ſinners do ſo much abaſe themſelves in the confeſſion of ſin, is, becauſe they have been ſhameleſs in ſinning; and therefore now they take ſhame to themſelves in repenting. In their ſtate of ſin they did like *Abſalom*, who defiled his Fathers Concubines *in the ſight of all Iſrael*? *Were they at all aſhamed when they committed abominations*, ſaith the Lord of *Judah*? *Nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh.* But when they repented and returned, *They ſmote upon their thigh, and were aſhamed, yea even confounded.* Now they ſee their filthineſs which before

2 Sam. 16.
Jer. 6. 15
Jer. 31. 19.

fore they did not, as *David* did. Now they look upon *their righteousneſs as filthy rags.* When the Lord converted *Saul*, *He fell on the earth:* the Lord humbled him, and he humbled himſelf. If they look to point of Merit and Deſert, they ſee they deſerve to lye as low as Hell: *It's the Lord's mercy we are not conſumed*: and therefore they lay themſelves as low as the Earth, as *Job* did, *Wherefore I abhor my ſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.* And if they look at Mercy, they ſee they have obtained that meerly becauſe God will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy. They lay themſelves low, when they remember Mercy: So *Iſrael* were to confeſs their Mercies with ſelf-abaſing, *A Syrian was my father, ready to periſh.* And therefore they muſt needs be much in ſelf-abaſing, when they remember and confeſs their Sins. And this ſhews them, that God is free in his Grace and Mercy to them; that there is nothing of Merit in their Repentance, and returning to God. For they had been what they were, ſtill in the ſtate of Sin and Wrath, had not the Lord been merciful to them, and pulled them out, as the Angel did *Lot* out of *Sodom.*

Pſal. 51. 2. Iſa. 64. 6. Acts 9. Lam. 3. 22. Job 42. Gen. 32. 10. Deut. 26. Gen. 19. 16.

Uſe. And let men judg of their Converſion by their confeſſing of Sin with Aggravation, and ſelf-abaſement. This begins with Converſion, and never ceaſeth, till a ſtate of Perfection. Whilſt we are liable to Sin, there muſt be ſelf-abaſing Confeſſion of Sin; whilſt the Ship leaks, the Pump muſt not ſtand ſtill. Scripture Saints have been free, and full, and melting this way; even ſuch a holy man as *Paul*, *I am carnal, ſold under ſin. In me dwells no good thing*: *When I would do good, evil is preſent with me*: *what I hate, that do I.* If you think *Paul* ſpeaks here of his unregenerate ſtate, you pleaſe the Papiſts and the Jeſuits well.

Rom. 7.

It's ſtrange to think how ſome men have knocked off from this Duty in late times: Some, through conceit of their perfection in this Life; and others, through a fancy that Chriſt hath repented for them. For the former, we read of no Saints in Scripture, who owned their perfection here, no not *Paul*. *Not that I have already attained*—— And for the other, Chriſt hath indeed ſatisfied for us, but not repented for us; he undertook that in his own Perſon; but this he left for us. And

Phil. 3. 12.

therefore, when Jesus Christ was ready to ascend, this was the
Luke 24. 47. order he gave his Disciples; That Repentance and Remission of Sin should be preached in his Name amongst all Nations. And surely, the holiest of Gods Children want not matter to shame themselves with before the Lord, in their most innocent
Rom. 7. days, as *Paul* did not. Oh! then believe not thy own heart, that thou art a converted sinner, unless thou find both disposition and action in confessing of Sin to God, as this returning Prodigal did.

The nature of man is hardly brought to a serious and sincere confession of Sin, he shuns it much. It's said of the *Elephant*, when he goeth into the Water to drink, he muddies the Water with his feet, that he may not see his own deformity; and thus do poor sinners. Wrinkled Faces care not for looking into the Glass. It's true, a formal, and general way of confession of sin, is a common thing; but it is not with
Chap. 9. that shame and blushing as in *Ezra*. Nor with that self-be-
Jer. 31. 18, 19. moaning, and self-condemning, as *Ephraims* was. Nor with that Aggravation of Sin, and self-abatement, as the repenting Prodigals was; nor with that sincerity as *Davids* was, *Psal.* 32. 2.

I might propound many things to you by way of motive. Confession goes before remission in Gods method: *I have sinned,*
2 Sam. 12. 13. saith *David, and the Lord hath put away thy sin,* saith *Nathan. David* had no peace in his Soul, whilst he suspended the con-
Psal. 32. 3. fession of his sin; but when he set about the work, he had
Matth. 8. good news, and was of good chear, as he was, *Son be of good chear, thy sins are forgiven. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of*
1 John 2. 2. *my sin.* Whilst we cover sin, Christ will not; we take his Office out of his hand.

To confess sin seriously and sincerely, is the next degree of happiness to not sinning. By this, you prevent Sa-
Rev. 12. tan, who is *the accuser of the brethren*; You prevent him from accusing you. It's true he charged *Job* to God; and with more than he could prove, for *Job* proved him a liar. Confession of sin, doubtless, is a very troublesome thing to the Devil;
2 John 1. 9. he knows it's a door of hope to a poor sinner.

And again, your charging your selves before God, prevents his charging of you. Sin must be judged in one Court,

or

or other; in the Court of Conſcience, or in the Court of Heaven; by our ſelves, or by God. God will be true to his Court of Juſtice, as well as to his Court of Mercy. The Goſpel hath provided a ſurety to ſatisfie the Law for the ſinner; yet the ſinner muſt judge himſelf; and if he doth ſo, God will not. *If we would judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged.* 1 Cor. 11. 31.

Again, God never takes advantage of a ſinners confeſſion of ſin, when he doth it with ſenſe and feeling, ſorrow and ſhame, and ſelf-loathing. People commonly ſay, Confeſs and be hanged; as *David* ſaid to the *Amalekite*, *Thy own mouth hath teſtified againſt thee*--- But God ſaith, confeſs and be pardoned: *He that confeſſeth, and forſakes ſin, ſhall find mercy.* 2 Sam. 1. Prov. 28. 13. If you be godly, you will endeavour to find out your unknown ſins, that you may confeſs them. So far will you be from covering thoſe you know.

Again conſider, that you cannot conceal any of your ſins from God: He ſaw the *Jews* ſecret Imageries, *Ezek.* 8. and *Moſes* ſaith, *Thou ſetteſt our ſecret ſins in the light of thy countenance.* Even ſins of infirmity unconfeſſed to God, may make them ſwell to ſins of a high nature; and therefore *David* did implicitely confeſs his unknown ſins, *O cleanſe thou me from ſecret ſins*, and begs of God to find out thoſe failings in him that he could not himſelf; that he might confeſs them, and avoid them. And *Elihu* taught *Job* to do this, *That which I know not, teach thou me.* And in a word, this is the thing that God expects from a repenting Sinner, on whom he will have Mercy. *Return thou back-ſliding Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, and I will not cauſe mine anger to fall upon thee; only acknowledg thine iniquity, that thou haſt tranſgreſſed againſt the Lord thy God. God looketh on men; and if any ſay, I have ſinned and perverted my way, and it profiteth me not; He will deliver his ſoul from going down to the pit, and his life ſhall ſee the light.* God will have a man guilty from his own mouth, and the Sinners conſcience is a thouſand Witneſſes. But yet all Confeſſion of ſin ſares not ſo well. *Pharoah*, *Saul*, and *Judas*, confeſſed their ſin, but it was to man, and not to God. True confeſſion of ſin, opens a door of hope; but theſe men either thought God not had enough Mercy for them, as *Cain* did, *Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven*; or elſe they were proud, and ſullen, and would Pſal. 90 8. Pſal. 19. 12. Job 34. Jer. 3. 12, 13. Job 33. 21. Ezra 10. 2. Gen. 4.

Luke 16. not ask it, as it is said of the unjust Steward, *I am ashamed to beg.* And their confession was narrow, of one particular act of sin; and forced also by meer terror of Conscience. Whereas true Confession of sin, is free and full: *I will arise and go to my father, and say, father I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.* And right confession of sin, begins at the heart; *Davids* heart smote him, and there saith he, *I have sinned, and done foolishly.* The Heart speaks more in Sighs, and Groans, and Grief, than the Mouth can speak in words. In true confession of sin, *the ax is laid to the root of the tree*, it strikes at the sinfulness of nature, and it strikes at heart-sin. As a man should know the *plague of his own heart*, so he should unlap this sore to God.

2 Sam. 24.
Rom. 8.26,27.
Psal. 51.
1 Kings 8. 38

I shall not now enter on the case of confession of sin to men, which is necessary in some cases, as of scandal to the Saints, or to get relief in trouble of Conscience, when it cannot be got without it. As for that place, in *Jam.* 5. 16. *Confess your faults one to another.* The reason of it was, they were given to contentions and broils amongst themselves, as in *Chap.* 4. and this hindered their praying together, and for one another. Now the Apostle would have them own the mutual wrongs done each to other, that they might be free to this duty of Prayer one for another, in their sicknesses; which it seems, were more than ordinary at that time.

Secondly, From the repenting Prodigals Aggravation of his sins in the confession of them, and the reasons why all Sinners do, and must do so; we may give an estimate of our own Spirits. It's an ill sign, when confession of sin goes off with ease, and little a do. Is it a small thing to sin against a great God? Your sin must be aggravated, till you come to make *Pauls* outcry, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?* Think with your selves, how contrary every one of your sins is to Gods Nature, and Gods Word. Every sin strikes at the very Being of God: It makes some say, *There is no God*, and others wish there were no God; and others to slight God in his word, and in his works; and therefore we cannot hyperbolize in our aggravating of sin, our own sins; tho they may seem less than some other mens. Consider how the Holy Ghost aggravates the sinfulness of our Nature, and how the People of

Rom. 7. 24.
Ezek. 16.

of God aggravated the ſinfulneſs of their righteouſneſſes; *All our righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags.* Matth. 23. One ſin of yours may make you guilty of ten thouſand ſins of that kind; as our Saviour charges the *Jews* with the guilt of all the righteous blood that had been ſhed, from that of *Abels.* When you cannot aggravate ſin, think of Chriſts ſufferings for it; who it was that ſufferred, the Son of God; and what he ſuffered, the wrath of God. And this he muſt have done if there had been but one ſinner, and one ſin in the world, yet that ſin could not have been pardoned, nor that ſinner ſaved, unleſs Chriſt had ſuffered. And think what relation to God, you ſin againſt, and what mercy and grace you ſin againſt, and how much careleſneſs there is in many of your ſins; and how much of your will and affections there are in ſome of your ſins. There are many things that may aggravate your ſins in the confeſſion of them, if you will take notice of them; and if you do not aggravate ſin your ſelves, God may take a courſe ſo to bring ſin home to your conſciences, as may teach you to your terror.

Thirdly, For ſelf-abaſing in the confeſſion of ſin, it becomes a returning ſinner: he knows that vileneſs, and baſeneſs of himſelf now, which he did not before. How like the Devil he was in his natural ſtate: that he was *of the wicked one*, as well as *Cain*; that he was *of his father the Devil, and would do his luſts*, as well as the *Jews*: every man, in his ſtate of ſin, is a Devil as well as *Judas*. Oh abaſe your ſelves when you confeſs ſin, as this ſinner did: *Father I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to called thy Son.* I am worſe than *Eſau*, he ſold his ſonſhip for hunger and need; but I have given away mine in wantonneſs, and to pleaſe my luſts, as *Adam* did his, for a thing like an Apple. I have made my ſelf a ſtranger, and an enemy to thee; and ſo not worthy the name of a Son. 1 John 3. John 8. John 6.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Sheweth, that true Penitents are very desirous to be reconciled to God, and that upon any terms. From the last Clause of the 19. *Verse.*

Make me as one of thy hired Servants.

I have done with the first part of the Prodigals Address, his humble confession of sin.

I come now to his modest request, *Make me as one of thy hired servants.*

Observe, how low he stoops and boweth; he saith not, one of thy servants; but one of thy hired servants. And this was but a mean condition amongst the *Jews*, they had not the priviledge of other servants. A hired servant might not eat of the passover, nor of the holy things; *Levit.* 22. 10. He was willing to be a door-keeper in his Fathers house, as *David* was; yea, to have the base office of the *Gibionites*, to be a Hewer of Wood, and a Drawer of Water for the congregation. He is willing to be *Issachar*, a hireling, as *Leah* called one of her Sons, an Ass couching between two burdens; this would please him better than his drudgery under the Citizen in the far Country, that set him to feed swine, and to feed with them. The prodigal would now do, as servants that loved their Masters, and were willing to abide with them; they had their Ears bored with an Awl to their Masters door, as a sign that they would be their servants for ever; all this, this Prodigal was willing to, if so be his father would receive him.

Psalm: 10.

Joshua 9.
Genesis 30.
Genesis 49.

Deut. 15. 17.

Now there are three Doctrines in these words,

1. *That returning sinners are very desirous to be reconciled to God*

2. *They*

2. *They would be glad of this upon any terms.*

3. *When men have grace, or are in the way to grace, they have mean and low thoughts of themselves.*

1. *That returnning sinners are very desirous to be reconciled to God.* Now this prodigal was come to himself, and going towards his Father, all his care was, to be reconciled to his Father. And this repenting prodigal is the representative of all true converts. *Absolom* was not so earnest to see the Kings face, as a returning sinner is of seeing the face of God.

And indeed this is a sign of a sinners being in the way of conversion, that his desire is to be reconciled to God. *Sauls* terrified conscience cried out only for some ease; *Davids* Harp must be sent for, to quiet the evil spirit; but not a word of the favour of God. But *Davids* troubled conscience looks not for any stupid or charmed peace, but for peace with God, a reception into his favour, who was displeased with him, as he had reason to be; *O cast me not out of thy presence.* And this was still the burden of the *Jews* in their returning to God. *Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved.* And so twice again in the same Psalm. *Absoloms* life did him no good, at least he pretended so, while he might not see the Kings face; but it is really and much more so with sinners, that look towards God; they are in as great trouble as *David*, whilst God hides his face.

1 Sam. 16.

Psal. 51. 11.

Psal. 80. 3.

Psal. 30. 7.

Quest. But what is reconciliation to God?

Ans. It is a returning to that state of friendship with God, that man had in the state of innocency. By the fall, man became alienated from God, both as a stranger, and as an enemy. Man naturally hates God, he could wish he were not, he is not in all his thoughts: and God hates him, as he did *Esau, Esau have I hated.* Yea, he hates sin in the elect; tho he love their persons. It is in conversion, by the infusion of grace, that the enmity of natures betwixt God and man is taken away, and slain, *Eph.* 2. 16. —

Col. 1. 20. Rom. 1. 30. Psal. 10. 4. Mal. 1. Rom 11. 28.

The

The Holy Angels need not this reconciliation, there hath been no breach between God and them: and the Devils ſhall never have it; Chriſt took not their nature; but reconciliation with God, is founded in Chriſt; he is *Emanuel*, *God with us*; and he brings Gods nature and ours together; *He is our peace.* Neither ſhall the damned ever have it; all men are offered it here; *as though God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt ſtead, be ye reconciled unto God.* But there is no offer of reconciliation by Chriſt to the damned in Hell. This is that grace and mercy that poor awakened ſinners now ſeek; to whom the light of Gods countenance is *better than corn, and wine*; Yea *better than life.*

Eph. 2.

2 Cor. 5. 20.

Pſal. 4. 7.
Pſal. 63. 3.

It's true, there was reconciliation with the elect in Gods purpoſe, from eternity, *God was in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf*: the world of the Elect, the whole number of the Elect. But this reconciliation is fixed in the conſcience of a ſinner at his converſion; and this is it that ſuch a ſinner longs after.

2 Cor. 5. 19.

Queſt. How may this reconciliation be known?

Anſ. Firſt, It's mutual; we are reconciled to God, as well as he to us: God will have a reflex act from us, upon all his acts of grace to us. His good will to us, begets good will in us to him; as he choſe us, ſo we chooſe him above all. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

Pſ. 73 25.

Secondly, Deſire of converſe and intercourſe with God, is an evidence of reconciliation. Strangeneſs to God is an ill ſign. But acquaintance and converſe, ſignifies well: *Truly our fellowſhip is with the father, and with his ſon Jeſus Chriſt.* This reconciliation begets boldneſs with God; there is no Cherubim with a ſword to keep ſuch a poor ſinner from God.

1 John 1. 3.

Thirdly, When you are reconciled to God, his enemies are yours. *Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?* Eſpecially ſin is now hated, becauſe that ſin is Gods great enemy. God hates the Devil, only for ſin; and were it not for ſin, he would not be the Devil. It is impoſſible to reconcile a man to ſin, who is reconciled to God. The end of Chriſts reconci-

Pſal. 139. 23.

ling

ling men to God, was to present them holy in his sight, Col. 1. 21, 22. *And you, who were sometimes enemies in your minds, by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled through death, to present you holy.*

Fourthly, The word of reconciliation is precious to them that are reconciled to God. *How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the Gospel of peace?* The Gospel is precious to them; and the ministry of the Gospel is precious to them, because it hath been to them the word of reconciliation. Rom. 10. 15.

Fifthly, There will follow a peaceable disposition towards all men. The Gospel alters and changes mens dispositions; It turns Wolves, and Lions, into Sheep, and lambs: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the Kid.* It's impossible for the Soul to feel pity from, and enjoy peace with God, and not to have a disposition to peace with men. wrought in it. Observe what the Apostle saith, Tit. 3. 3. *Shewing all meekness to all men: for we our selves were sometimes foolish, and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, hateful, and hating one another: but after that the kindness and love of God appeared*, then the case was altered. A harsh, surly, and proud disposition towards other men, even sinful men, is a sign we have not felt the sweetness and mildness of Gods nature, in being reconciled to us. Isa. 11. 6, 7.

Use. This informs us when a troubled sinner is near his conversion; When he is sensible of his distance from God, and seeks out for reconciliation with him. Terror and horror of conscience for sin, are not infallible forerunners of a sinners conversion; they were in *Cain*, and *Saul*, who yet died unconverted; they never sought to make their peace with God, as this prodigal did.

Oh thou convinced, and humbled, and terrified sinner, find this earnest desire in thy Soul, to be reconciled to God, and to be brought nigh to him, and to be in a state of friendship and acquaintance with him; and be sure thy state is good.

2. Doct. *Repenting and returning sinners are glad of peace with God upon any terms.* If the prodigal might but be received

ceived by his Father, he would be content to be in the meaneſt capacity: *Make me as one of thy hired ſervants.* A returning ſinner had rather that God ſhould rule over him, and command him any thing, any ſervice; than that his luſts ſhould rule over him, and Satan rule over him; which they did in his natural and ſinful ſtate; as you ſee in the prodigals ſlavery to the Citizen. Every convert may ſay to God, as
Iſa 26. 13. thoſe ſelf-bewaling *Jews* did, *Other Lords beſides thee, have had dominion over us; but its thy name we would make mention of:* do thou with us what thou wilt, and make us to do what thou wilt. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to*
Act. 9. *do?*

Paul endured much hardſhip after his converſion, as you ſee in 2 *Cor.* 11. and yet he valued his ſtate of grace, with all his hardſhip, and infirmities, above all his peace and priviledges, when he was a *Phariſee.*
Phil. 3. 7. *What things were gain to me, I counted loſs for Chriſt. Yea doutleſs, I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord; for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Chriſt.* He thought himſelf a gainer, by looſing all his priviledges as a *Jew*, and a *Phariſee*, for Chriſt. So a true convert, troubles not himſelf about his low condition in the world, or his mean parts, if ſo be he hath grace, and can do God any ſervice.

A convert looks upon grace, to all wordly things, as the people looked upon *David: Thou art worth ten thouſand of*
2 Sam. 18. *us*, ſay they to *David.* The form of a ſervant, and poverty, went down well with Chriſt, that thereby he might bring ſinners home to God. And ſo, when the ſinner is coming home to God, it pleaſeth him, tho it be with poverty, loſs
Iſa. 23. 18. of Friends, eſtate, any wordly conveniences, or priviledges, his reconciliation to God, and the favour of God towards him anſwers all theſe; as *David* ſaid, *One day in thy courts is*
Pſal 84. 11. *better than a thouſand elſe where.* He had rather live one day in the preſence of God, in the meaneſt, and moſt abject condition; than in the moſt ſplendid and flouriſhing condition, at a diſtance from God: he had rather lye a Lazar at Gods door (an ancient uſe in the Church,) than to be great in the world,
Exod. 33. and a ſtrainger to God. *Moſes* was well ſatisfied with the ſight of Gods Glory.

3. Doct.

3. Doct. *When men have grace, or are in the way to a ſtate of grace, they have mean thoughts of themſelves. I am no more worthy to be called thy ſon, make me as one of thy hired ſervants.* When the *Centurion*, a great Commander, began to believe, he thought himſelf not worthy that Chriſt ſhould come under his roof; whereas it may be the Soldiers under him, deſpiſed Chriſt. And when *Paul* was in a ſtate of grace, he conceived of himſelf *as leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints.* He had as high thoughts of himſelf, when a *Phariſee*, as any man. *I was alive without the law*, ſaith he. Grace is a ſelf-emptying thing: a man by this, ſeeth himſelf, and God too, with other eyes than formerly. *Thou art a gracious God*, ſaid that holy Martyr *Ridly*, *And I am a ſink of ſin; thou art heaven, and I am hell.* And *John*, who was greater than all the Prophets, yet when he ſpeaks of Chriſt, he is not worthy to carry or unty his Shooes. It troubled not the Woman of *Canaan* to be called a dog, when ſhe was in the way to Chriſt. *Truth Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their Maſters table.*

Matt 8. Eph. 3 8. Rom 7. Matth. 11. Matth 3 Matth 15.

When God magnifies the riches of grace to a man, then he becomes poor in ſpirit. His eyes are opened to ſee his nakedneſs, as *Adam* and *Eves* were. The prodigal thought himſelf not worthy of the ground he trod on, when he was a convinced and humbled ſinner. Such a man ſpeaks to God, as *Mephiboſheth* did to *David*; *What is thy ſervant, that thou ſhouldeſt look upon ſuch a dead dog?* And now a man is alſo nearer God than he was: as he ſees that of his own ſinfulneſs, ſo he ſeeth that of Gods holineſs, which he never did before: and this maks him ſtill to become the more vile in his own eyes. For the nearer a man comes to God, the more diſcovery is made to him of his own filthineſs; as when the Sun comes into a Room, it diſcovers the moths that are there. *Wo is me*, ſaith the Prophet, *I am undone*; for *I am a man of polluted lips*: How came he to be ſo vile in his own eyes? *For mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of Hoſts.*

Gen. 3. 2 Sam 9 8. Iſaiah 6. 5.

Uſe. First, This is for the encouragement of convinced and ſelf-abaſing ſinners: ſuch are neareſt the favour of God, When they are judging themſelves moſt unworthy of it; they are neareſt grace, when they are moſt ſenſible of their vile-

Jam. 4. Luk. 14. nes by sin. *He giveth grace unto the humble.* They were the blind and the lame that were brought in to the Kings great supper. Then doth God shew a man mercy and grace, when in his own apprehension he least deserves it. The blind and the lame, were the poor *Publicans*; these were they that entred into the Kingdom, when the self-conceited *Jews* and *Pharisees* were shut out.

When a man becomes vile in his own eyes, and unworthy of the favour of God, it's a sign he borders at least on a state of grace. For where God promiseth a new heart, and Eze. 36. a new spirit, he there saith, *They shall loath themselves in their own sight for their iniquities.* Grace is of an abasing nature; the greatest humiliation hath there been seen, where there hath been most grace, and men have been neerest to God: Job. 42. *Now mine eyes have seen thee*, saith *Job*: *wherefore I abhor my* Gen. 18. *self in dust and ashes.* And *Abraham* calls himself *dust and* Gen. 32. *ashes*, when the Lord was talking with him; Gods worthies have always esteemed themselves most unworthy. The Devil can tell professors, that he doth as they do; he believes and trembles, he is no drunkard, no adulterer, he fasts and watches. But what said a good man in such a temptation, I pray, and I abase my self, which the Devil cannot do.

But take heed of proud humility, for such there is. The Col. 2. Apostle speaks of a *Voluntary humility*, humility of mens own coining, and not Gods, as most of the *Papists* is. What a strange expression was that, *I am unworthy that God should damn me.* But there is a wild Rose, and a Garden Rose; there is a legal, and phantastical humility; and there is a self-abasement which grows in the Gospel: one which at best is but forced by a slavish fear of God; the other, from a sence of the riches and freeness of Gods mercy and grace, and a real sense of a mans own unworthiness; as St. *Pauls* was, who conceived himself Eph. 3. 8. *less than the least of saints*, because he thought he had been a- 1 Tim. 1. 14. mongst the chief of sinners: and withall considered how superabounding the grace of God had been towards him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Wherein is ſhewed, That the good purpoſes of a returning Sinner, are ſuch as take effect. From the firſt part of the 20. *Verſe.*

And he aroſe, and came to his Father.

WE have done with the Prodigals Conſideration and Reſolution. Now follows his Action, or his Execution of what he had reſolved upon, *And he aroſe, and came to his father.* In the 17. Verſe, he came to himſelf, here to his Father; that is, towards his Father; for his Father ſaw him a far off, and ran, and met him, as it follows. He firſt conſidered, then reſolved, then returned; ſo that he did what he thought and ſaid.

Doct. That a true Penitent ſtops not, till he hath brought his Reſolution into Action.

It's to be feared that thouſands live and die in the former, ſuch as it is, and never come to the latter; or rather in ſome faint purpoſes, which never take effect. It's the nature of man to think of doing good, and unthink it again; yea, in ſome ſort, to reſolve of doing good, and yet his Reſolutions wither, and die, and come to nothing. *Pharoah* had his good moods, when he ſaid, *I have ſinned, the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked*; but he eat his words preſently. And *Balaam* wiſhed well, *Let me die the death of the righteous* ——— but it ended in a wiſh. And *Ahab* humbled himſelf; but it was but like the Ice, that is broken over night, and frozen again in the morning; *Ahab* returned to his former hardneſs of heart. The Children of *Iſrael* had many good purpoſes and reſolutions; but they vaniſhed away, and came not into anſwerable Actions. *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay, and ſpeak thou unto us*

Exod. 9. 27.

Num. 23. 10.

1 Kings 21.

Deut. 5. 27.

all

all that the Lord our God ſhall ſpeak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it; but they never did it. And therefore ſaith the Lord, *They have well ſaid, all that they have ſpoken; but, O that there were ſuch a heart in them.* And ſo ſay they to *Joſhua*, *We will ſerve the Lord, for he is our God.* And when *Joſhua* told them, *they could not ſerve the Lord:* ſay they, *nay, but we will ſerve the Lord.* But theſe Reſolutions lived no longer than *Joſhua*, and the Elders in his time. The Lord found them but a wordy, flaſhy People, as we ſee in that complaint of them: *O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? O Judah, what ſhall I do unto thee? for your goodneſs is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.* Many, whilſt they are hearing a Sermon, or at Prayer, or under an affliction; they are affected, and convinced that they have not done their Duty; and now they will ſet upon it; and yet, when the Sermon is over, and the ſound of it is out of their ears, and Prayer is over, and the Affliction is over; their good thoughts and purpoſes are over too. Juſt like wax, that ſoftens whilſt it's held to the Candle; but take it away, and it hardens again.

Joſh. 24: 18.

Verſ 21, 24 Judg 2.

Hoſ 6. 4.

How many poor ſinful Creatures, upon ſome rubs of Conſcience, are thinking and purpoſing to leave this and that luſt, and ſinful way, and to ſet upon their Duty; and yet obſerve them, and let them obſerve themſelves, and there is little performance of any thing that was in their thoughts. Juſt like a door, that moves this and that way; yet, ſtill hangs upon the hinges, and in the ſame place. Moſt mens good purpoſes, like *Jonah* his gourd, flouriſh to day, and wither to morrow.

Jonah 4.

Queſt. But how comes this to paſs?

Anſ. 1. It proceeds from the fickle nature of man. It may be ſaid of mans nature, as to that which is good, as *Jacob* ſaid of *Reuben, unſtable as water*, light and inconſtant; man ſtood in his innocency but a very little while. God can put no truſt in mans nature: as he ſaid, he putteth no truſt in his Servants; however ſome men magnifie the nature of man, even in this point of Converſion we are upon.

Gen. 49. 4.

Job 4.

2. Becauſe mens good Purpoſes and Reſolutions are but half Purpoſes, as *Agrippa* was but almoſt perſwaded to be a Chriſtian.

Acts 26.

Christian. It is so too commonly; mens Conceptions are but weak or false, that come not to the Birth, or else there is not strength to bring forth. Their Purposes and Resolutions for good, are as *Ephraim, half baked*, or as it is said of the *Laodiceans, Neither cold not hot.* They are as crude and uncon- Hos. 7. Rev. 3. cocted meat, that turns not to any nourishment. Like sudden and violent motions, which are seldom lasting.

Yea, sometimees men have secret checks in their Purposes and Resolutions for good: as *Augustine* said of himself, that when he prayed against a particular Sin, he had a secret wish that he might keep the sin still.

Use. 1. This may be for a lamentation, that mens lives are spent much in wishes and words; and in such kind of Purposes and Resolutions, the least part of which oftentimes comes not into Action and Performance, as *Moses* said, *We spend* Psal. 90 9. *our years as a tale that is told.* Have you not had Purposes to pray more, and more vigorously? to look to your ways more narrowly? as *David, I said I will take heed to my ways,* Psal. 39 1. *that I sin not with my tongue.* Have you not had Purposes and Resolutions to take your selves more off from the World, and to role Eternity more in your minds? And yet, how little have your Actions herein amounted to? How have you deceived your selves, by such Purposes? and God, by your Nonperformane? If your Purposes and Resolutions are not followed by Performance and Action, they are but as Grass upon the house-tops, *which withereth before it groweth up.* As Psal 129. 6. *David* said, Psal. 32. *I will confess my transgression to the Lord:* So he did it presently, he set upon it without delay. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies*; these were twins. What time was there betwixt his Psal. 119. 59. thinking and doing what he thought? Why, as it is said of *Jobs* messengers, *Whilst one was speaking, another came. Da-* Job 1. *vid* made no pause, and therefore in the next words saith he, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commands.* Alas, how many are often purposing and resolving, and never come to Performance, as it's said of those silly Women which were led captives by creepers into Houses; they are *ever learning, and never come to the knowledg of the truth.* 2 Tim 3. 7.

Indeed, sometimes God himself may intercept a godly mans purposes

purpoſes of doing good; as it was in *Davids* heart to build
1 Chr. 28. 2. God an houſe; but God ſaid unto him, *Thou ſhalt not build me an houſe*, but thy Son ſhall do it. When the caſe is thus, God takes the will for the deed, and likes the purpoſe better than the performance. Many a godly man would do more for
Gen. 22. God, than God will let him; his will is larger than his works; ſo was *Pauls*. When it came to it, God would not let *Abra-*
Acts 16. 7. *ham* offer up *Iſaac* in Sacrifice, as he had before commanded. Thus *Paul* and *Silas* were hindered by the Spirit, in their purpoſes to go into *Bithinia*: *the ſpirit ſuffered us not*. Either
Acts 16. 9. by a voice behind them, as in Iſa. 30. *Thine ear ſhall hear a voice behind thee, ſaying, this is the way, walk in it*. Or elſe
John 3 6. by a Viſion, as he ſent them into *Macedonia* by a Viſion. And why did the Spirit forbid them to go and preach there? Becauſe the Spirit bloweth where it liſteth; not only in the
Amos 4. infuſion of Grace, but in giving the means of Grace. The Goſpel keeps not a ſetled courſe as the Sun doth. But as the Lord *cauſed it to rain upon one city, and not upon another*; So doth he uſe the like liberty in his diſpoſing of the Goſpel, and
Pſal 147. 19. the word of Reconciliation: *He ſheweth his word unto Jacob, and his ſtatutes to Iſrael; he hath not done ſo with any Nation.*
1 Theſ 2 18. And ſomtimes Satan may hinder a good mans good Purpoſes from being performed. So it was with *Paul's*, *We would have*
Phil. 2. *come to you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.* Whether Satan hindered by ſickneſs, as he did *Epaphroditus*; or Impriſonment, as in *Rev.* 2. 10. or by ſtorms at Sea, or finding him other work, diſputing work with the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*, it is not expreſſed; but it is expreſſed that Satan hindered him.

Now in this caſe a mans non-performance of Purpoſes, is not charged upon him, becauſe it was utterly againſt his Will
Chap. 1. 13. and Affections; ſo *Paul* told the *Romans*, *That he often purpoſed to come to them, but was let hitherto.* Whether by the Holy Spirit, or the Devil, or how elſe, he ſaith not; but it's certain it was no frivolous excuſe. It's ſaid, Ezra 4. 5. *That the people of the land hired counſellors to fruſtrate the purpoſes of the people of Judah, in building the temple, all the days of Cyrus.*

But *thirdly*, The Corruption of Nature, may keep a godly mans good Purpoſes and Reſolutions from being brought to per-

performance; either againſt his will, as Gal. 5. 17. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, ſo that we cannot do the things that we would*; or with his will and liking. For our corrupt Nature is prone to ſhuffle with God, as *Jacob* did about his Vow, Gen. 35. and *Hezekiah*, in his Reſolution upon his recovery. But it Iſa. 38. coſt them dear; more ſorrow for their neglect, than it would have done care and pains to have been as good as their word.

But as for other men, it is ordinary with them to flatter God with good thoughts and good words; as if they would do great matters, and yet will do nothing. And if they do a little, yet they *return again with the dog to the vomit.* The Pſal. 78:36,37. unclean Spirit returns again to the old lodging with more company, and worſe than before.

Uſe 2. Let me exhort you therefore, to ſee that your Reſolutions to do good, be more Maſculine. Let your purpoſes be Acts 19. 21. in the Spirit, as *Pauls* was. Look for the influence of the Spirit in them. Be not led by Carnal wiſdom, or Carnal ends. Let not your purpoſes be according to the fleſh. Such Pur- 2 Cor. 1. 17. poſes as theſe, will be yea, and nay, according as Circumſtances alter with you; but purpoſe in the Spirit and in heart, ſincerely, and vigorouſly, as *David* did, *I purpoſe in my heart,* Pſal. 17. 3. *that my mouth ſhall not tranſgreſs.* And *Daniel* purpoſed in his heart, *that he would not defile himſelf with the kings meat.* Dan. 2. 8. There is a ſweet harmony betwixt the Hearts and Mouths of the Saints, which there is not in other men: *With the heart* Rom. 10. *man believeth to righteouſneſs, and with the tongue confeſſion is made unto ſalvation.*

Secondly, When you purpoſe and reſolve againſt ſin, and upon your duty; let your purpoſes be emptied of Self-conceit, of all Opinion of Self-ſufficiency; otherwiſe your Purpoſes and Reſolutions will but weaken you the more, as *Peters* did him. Let Purpoſes of this Nature be ever coupled with Humility, and a ſenſe of Self-inſufficiency: *Not that we are ſufficient of our ſelves, to think any thing, as of our ſelves; all our ſufficiency is of God.* Therefore reſolve, and take in 2 Cor. 3. 5. God in your Reſolutions; reſolve with diffidence of ſtrength at home, and dependance on ſtrength abroad: *Be ſtrong in*

Eph. 6. *the Lord, and in the power of his might.* When you purpose in the things of God, get God in as your surety, so did *David, Be surety for thy servant for good.* Undertake for me, that I shall do, what I have sworn to do. Your own purposes alone, against any particular Lust, do but latch the door; a temptation opens it with ease: It's your going out against it in the name of the Lord, as *David* did against *Goliah*, that overcomes it. And just so it is in your purposes to that which is good; *I have laboured*, saith *Paul*; *yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* He durst not say, *I can do all things*, without adding *through Christ that strengthens me.*

Psal. 119.122. Ver. 106.

2 Cor. 15.

Phil. 4. 13.

Therefore, *thirdly*, be as much in Prayer, as in good Purposes. Pray as *David* did, *O Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel thy servants, keep this for ever in the imaginations of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people, and prepare, or stablish their heart unto thee*: He mentions *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Israel*, because God made and kept his Covenant with them; and therefore begs of God to make his People Covenant-keepers, as well as Covenant-makers. *Keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people*; This Resolution, to give what we have, and our selves too, to Thee. Keep this *in the imagination*, that is, in the purpose *of the hearts of thy people.* Prayer is a good Midwife to purposes of doing good. If Prayer upon good purposes, have Affection, and Faith, and Poverty of Spirit in it; it will not return empty, as *Naomi* did, but full-handed. Such prayer is a trusty Messenger between God and his People: *Blessed be God*, saith *David*, *that hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.* And so much for the first Observation, That a true Penitent stops not till he hath brought Resolution into Action. The Prodigal did, what he said he would do, *He said, I will arise, and go to my Father:* and *he arose, and came to his father.*

1 Chron. 29.

Ruth 1.

Psal. 66. 20.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Which ſheweth, that in every true Convert, there is a principle of ſpiritual Life; the firſt great ſign of which, is his departure from ſin. From the ſame words,

And he aroſe, and came to his Father.

WHen the prodigal came to himſelf, he revived, he put forth the actions of Life. There was a principle of ſpiritual Life infuſed into him: He aroſe from the dead. Jeſus called him out of his ſpiritual death, as he did *Lazarus* out of his Grave. As the motion of the Wheels was by the ſpirit of the living creatures; ſo is a ſinners motion towards God; It is as he is moved by the Spirit. As holy men of God ſpake, *as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.* Few men know what repentance, or riſing from ſpiritual death means, or what power goeth to it. No leſs, but more, than went to the creation of the Sun, or the reſurrection of *Lazarus* to Life: *We are the workmanſhip of God created in Chriſt Jeſus.* It's Gods Power alone, that quickens a ſinner that is dead in treſpaſſes and ſins: You hath he quickened who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. Yea, this needs more power than the work of creation: for as the power of God found nothing to make all things of; ſo he found no reſiſtance. But here, he finds that which is worſe than nothing, the greateſt reſiſtance the creature can make: *How often would I, and ye would not?*

Eze. 1. 2 Pet. 1. 21. Eph. 2. 10. Eph. 2. 1. Matth. 23.

It's true, ſometimes this is ſpoken of, as the ſinners work; but then it is to be underſtood onely of his Duty. *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* All Duty is not the meaſure of a mans Power. A Creditor may call for his debts, of a man that hath diſabled himſelf utterly to pay them. God calls for no more from man, than once he gave him power enough to do.

Eze. 33. 11.

John 6. 44. But now ſaith Chriſt, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath ſent me, draw him.* The raiſing of a ſinner from ſpiritual death, is a work of Omnipotency; the act is his, but the Power is Gods: It is grace that brings a ſinner into a ſtate of grace. But of this, when I come to thoſe words; *This my ſon was dead, and is alive again.* Onely you may ſee, by what hath been ſaid, That the repenting ſinner, is no leſs than a wonder. And its ſtrange, that we do not wonder at ſuch an one more. When *Lazarus* roſe from his grave, it amazed all men; It was the great talk and diſcourſe of all; the *Phariſees* and *Rulers*, they meet in Counſel about it; and if they take not ſome courſe, *All men will believe in Jeſus:* and the people, they flock to ſee *Lazarus.*

John 12. 9.

Doutleſs there is great ſtriving betwixt God and Satan about the dead ſinner; as there was betwixt *Michael* the Arch-Angel and the Devil, about *Moſes* his dead body. But I proceed.

Jude. 9.

He aroſe and came to his father. Life is active, natural life is, much more is ſpiritual life; which in ſome degree, is the life of God; and ſo all it's action and motion, is toward God, and for God, and with God. Spiritual life is of the Divine nature: And as ſpiritual life is the moſt excellent life, ſo it is the moſt powerful, as it is ſaid of the word of God. Whereever ſpiritual life comes, it comes with great power. It hath more power over the Devil, than *Adam* had in his ſtate of Innocency. *It overcomes the wicked one*; Yea, this life hath power with God, as *Jacob* had. And it hath right to all things; and can poſſeſs all things, and can do all things. But the great end of ſpiritual life is, to capacitate a man for comunion with God. It's ſaid here, that when the prodigal came to himſelf, he aroſe and came to his Father. So then the great Doctrine from theſe words is,

Heb. 4. 12.
1 John 2. 14.
Gen. 32. 28.
2 Cor. 3. 22.
2 Cor. 6. 10.
Phil. 4. 13.

Doct. That a ſinner in his converſion comes to God, or returns from ſin to God: *If ye will return, O Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, return unto me*: herein they were defective, *they return, but not to the moſt high.* They made a ſhew of repentance, but it was a repentance to be repented of; they returned but came ſhort of God in converſion; a ſinners firſt work is regreſſive, from ſin to God. When he is come home to God, then his work is progreſſive; he goes from ſtrength to ſtrength;

Acts 26. 18.
Jer. 4. 1.
Hoſ. 7. 16.

Pſal. 84. 7.

and

and is changed from glory to glory. Sin is the *Terminus a quo*, the excentrick or irregular courſe from which; and God is the *Terminus ad quem*, the Center to which the ſinner moves in his converſion. If he ſtop at civility, his converſion is nothing; or if he ſtop at a form of godlineſs, or any thing elſe before he comes to God, his repentance is not *Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.* There are many ſinners who ſeem to be upon their return towards God; yet periſh in the way. As *Iſrael* returned from *Egypt*, but never came to *Canaan*. Tho there be no middle ſtate betwixt a ſtate of ſin and a ſtate of grace; yet a man may return from any ſin, and ſinful ways, and yet not return home to God. The prodigals leaving the far countrey, had been nothing, if he had not returned to his Fathers houſe. All a ſinners returnings, are but wandrings, unleſs he return to God; as *Iſrael* wandered betwixt *Egypt* and *Canaan*.

2 Cor. 3. 18. 2 Cor. 7. 10. Pſal 2. 12.

But no man can return to God, except withall he firſt returns from ſin. *Adams* hiding himſelf from God, when he had ſinned, proves that ſin is a departing from God. And ſo repentance is a departing from ſin. Every man in a ſtate of ſin ſaith in his heart to God, *Depart from us.* He doth not beſeech him to depart from him, as the *Gadarenes* did Chriſt, for fear; but he doth it out of choice; as the prodigal went into a far countery from his Father, upon choice, to ſatisfy his luſts. But now when a man returns to God, he departs from ſin; he unſins his ſins, as much as repentance for them can do it. He undoth, to his uttermoſt, all that he had done in his natural ſtate: he now walks contrary to his former ſelf. As the Jaylor that had uſed *Paul* and *Silas* cruelly, when he was converted, he *waſhed their ſtripes*; and it may be, bathed them with his Tears, as *Mary-Magdalen* did Jeſus his feet. Not that a man in his converſion to God leaves all ſin behind him, and carries none with him: no, experience diſproves this. Tho no ſin be compatible or conſiſtant with a ſtate of glory, yet it is with a ſtate of grace. Tho no clouds can be mixed with the Sun in the Heavens, yet they may with the light of the Sun in the Air. Glory annihilates and removes the very being of ſin; grace onely takes away the dominion of it. There is no man free from all ſin; but hath reaſon daily to bewail that ſin which dwelleth in him, as St. *Paul* did.

Job 21. 14. Matth 8. 34. Acts 16. 33. Luke 7. 33. Rom. 7.

There

There is not a Scripture-Saint, but carries the ſcars of ſin: *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Moſes*, and *David*, and *Jonah*, yea and *Paul*, and *Barnabas*. But tho no man is fully free from ſin, yet every returning ſinner becomes free,

Acts 15.

1*ſt*. From the law of ſin, *Rom.* 8. 2.

2*ly*. Full of enmity to all ſin. A true convert hateth ſin more than he luſted after it before; as *Amnon* did *Tamar*: *What I hate, that do I*, ſaith St. *Paul*.

2 Sam. 13
Rom. 7. 15.

3*dly*. He leaves behind him thoſe particular and ſpecial ſins whereby he moſt grieved and diſhonoured God in his natural ſtate. In converſion all ſins are repented of, but ſome more obſervably; as thoſe wherein we have more eminently walked contrary to God, and more daringly ſinned againſt him. Thus we find, when *Ephraim* repented, and returned to God, he caſt away his Idols, with the greateſt abhorrence: *What have I to do any more with Idols.* Idolatry had been *Ephraims* God-provoking ſin: and now *Ephraim* abhorreth Idols; ſaith to them, as in Iſa. 30. *Get you hence. Then ſaid Samuel to Iſrael, If ye do return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away your ſtrange gods, and Aſhteroth.* Eſpecially *Aſhteroth*, becauſe that had been their great Idol.

Hoſ. 14 8.

1 Sam. 7. 3.

Every man in his natural ſtate, ordinarily, hath his *Delilah* in his boſom, his Idol in his heart, his beloved luſt; either drunkenneſs, or uncleaneſs, or covetouſneſs, or pride of life, or pride of parts: and at his converſion, tho he repent of all ſin, and mourn over all; yet chiefly, over theſe daring and provoking ſins: as *Moſes* ſaid to *Iſrael*, *Remember how ye provoked God in the wilderneſs.*

Deut. 9. 7.

When *Zacheus* came to Chriſt, he repented of all ſin, but eſpecially of his oppreſſion and extortion. So *Paul* who had been a proud *Phariſee*, and ſelf-juſticiary, and a cruel ſpirited man againſt the Saints, in his natural ſtate; when he was converted, he was the greateſt deſpiſer of ſelf-righteouſneſs, and admirer of Chriſts righteouſneſs, of any man; and he was in a wonder that ſuch a perſecutor as he ſhould obtain mercy.

Lu 19. 8.

Phil 3. 8, 9.

1 Tim. 1. 13.

4*thly*. When a ſinner returns to God, he leaves behind him ſuch ſins as are inconſiſtent with a ſtate of grace; as,

1. Groſs

1. Groſs and ſcandalous Sins; theſe ſins diſappear after Converſion. Indeed it's poſſible for the regenerate to commit ſuch ſins as theſe, ſo did *Noah*, and *Lot*, and *David*; but not to live in them, as Sinners do before their Converſion; *Such were ſome of you*, ſaith the Apoſtle. A convert forſakes many ſins, which were common with him before Converſion. *The time paſt of our lives may ſuffice us, to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles.* 1 Cor 6. 11. 1 Pet 4. 3.

2. No reigning ſin is conſiſtent with a ſtate of Grace. *Sin ſhall not have dominion over you, becauſe ye are under grace.* Sin may be *Vincent*, but not *Regnant*, in a regenerate man; may overcome him, but not rule over him. Conqueſt reſpects Power, Dominion reſpects Will. It's true, Sin may have a tyrannical Power over a Saint, but not the Power of a Lord or Maſter, to whom he obeys; he may be in ſlavery to ſin, but not a ſervant; that is a forced thing, this a thing of choice. *Paul* was ſold under ſin, but *Ahab* ſold himſelf to ſin. In the one there is unwillingneſs, great trouble and groaning. In the other there is conſent, and content, they are willingly what they are. Rom. 6. 14. Rom. 7. 14. Rom. 7. 28. 2 Pet. 3.

Fifthly, In Converſion, a Sinners return from ſin to God is unfeigned and free, not as *Phaltiels* from his Wife, with a heavy heart; or as *Auguſtine* in his youth, who when he prayed againſt ſuch or ſuch a ſin, had ſtill a ſecret luſting after it. Before Converſion, men ſin with all their heart, and therefore in Converſion they ſhould turn to God with all their heart, as *Ruth* followed *Naomi*; ſhe did it with all her Soul, ſhe would not be intreated to the contrary: *Intreat me not to return from following thee; for where thou goeſt, I will go.* The moſt pleaſing Luſts, the deareſt Relations, the moſt appearing worldly Inconveniencies, cannot hinder a converts affectionate and melting return from Sin to God. As the Lord ſaid of his Peoples return from *Babylon* to their own Countrey; *They ſhall come with weeping, and with ſupplications will I lead them.* And ſo we have ſeen how a Sinner in his Converſion returns from ſin. 2 Sam 3. 2 Chron. 6. 38. Ruth 1. 16. Jer. 31. 9.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Sheweth, Wherein a Sinner in his Converſion returns to God. And firſt, to the Divine Image. From the ſame words,

And he aroſe, and came to his Father.

I Come now to the other Term, or part of a Sinners Converſion, his Return to God. Which conſiſteth in theſe four Particulars.

1. He returns to the Image and Likeneſs of God.
2. To acquaintance and Communion with God.
3. To due Subjection to God.
4. To that Dominion over other things recovered by Chriſt.

1. A Sinner in his Converſion returns to the Image and Likeneſs of God. None but rational Creatures are capable of the Image of God. The footſteps and the ſhadow of God may be ſeen in the whole Creation. A man may be known from a beaſt by his footſteps, or his ſhadow, or a great man from a little man; but there cannot be an individial knowledg, that he is this or that man, by either. So we may know that there is a God by the Creature; and that he is a great Almighty God. The *inviſible things of him, from the creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* But the Image of God is only to be ſeen in the rational Creature, Angels and Men. And therefore Angels are called *the ſons of God*, and *Adam* is called *the ſon of God.*

Rom. 1. 20.

Job 1. 6. Luke 3. 38.

There are two things required to an Image ſtrictly ſo called.

Firſt,

Firſt, That it is to be like that, whoſe Image it is.

Secondly, That it be made from it. There muſt be more to make an Image, than likeneſs; for one Apple or Egg, may be like another; and yet the one is not the Image of the other. And therefore an Image muſt be made from that which it repreſents, and is the Image and likeneſs of. So the Impreſſion on the Wax, is not only like the Seal, but is from the Seal, whereof it is the Image. And ſo, the Image of a mans Face in a Glaſs, is like it, and from it. In like manner, a Sinner in his Converſion, receives or is reſtored to the Image of God: he returns to a likeneſs to God, and this likeneſs is from God. He returns to that Image of God, after which man was created in his ſtate of Innocency; yet with ſome difference. For,

Firſt, *Adam* was made after the Image of God, like the Moon in the full, perfectly and fully; the Sun enlightens its whole Hemiſphere. Man in his natural ſtate ſince the fall, is like the Moon in the *Interlunium*, or ſpace betwixt the old Moon and the new, altogether obſcured. But the Image of God in Man returned to God, is like the light on the Moon, waxing and growing by degrees, till it come to the full. Now tho *Adam* was made perfectly Holy and Good, yet not immutably holy and like God. But a converted Sinner, tho he be not like God, ὁλῶς, perfectly, but in part, yet he is like God ὁλοτελῶς. 1 Cor. 15. he cannot loſe his likeneſs to God, he cannot utterly fall from it. Pſal. 37. 24.

Second'y, *Adam* received the Image of God, and likeneſs to God, immediately from God; but man in his Converſion hath it from God, through the Face of Jeſus Chriſt, as ſhall be ſhewed in the cloſe of this point.

Queſt. But what is this Image or Likeneſs of God, to which a Sinner is reſtored in his Converſion?

Anſ. The Apoſtle *Paul* reſolves and branches it into three points. *Firſt*, Knowledg; *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledg, after the image of him that created him.* Col. 3. 10. *Secondly*, Righteouſneſs. And *Thirdly*, True Holineſs. *And that ye put on the new man, which after God*, or after the Eph. 4. 24.

Image of God, *is created in righteousneſs and true holineſs.* Theſe, the Holy Ghoſt here calls, *the new man*, in 2 Cor. 5. 17. *The new creature*, in 1 John 3. 9. *The ſeed of God*, in 2 Pet. 2. 4. A mans being *partaker of the divine nature.*

Firſt, He is reſtored to the Image of God in knowledg: *Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledg, after the image of him that created him.* The Apoſtle *John* ſaith, that
1 John 1. 5. *God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all.* He is light; Knowledg and light is God Eſſence, he underſtands all things by his own Eſſence. God is Knowledg and Light it ſelf; *dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no*
1 Tim. 6. 16. *man hath ſeen, nor can ſee.*

Now when a man is renewed to the Image and likeneſs of
Eph. 5. 8. God, he alſo is Light: *Ye were ſometimes darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord.* And this in *Rom.* 12. 2. the Apoſtle calls, *transformed by the renewing of the mind.* The mind of a converted Sinner, is that which receives the Light of God, or Divine ſpi-
Pſal 36. ritual Light from God, as the air doth the Light of the Sun. Every Saint ſeeth light in Gods Light. God is *the father of lights*,
Jam. 1. 17. Luke 16. 8. and Saints are *the children of light*: *the children of this world are wiſer in their generations than the children of light.*

It may be ſaid to every true convert, as the Prophet did to
Iſa. 60. 1. the Church, *Ariſe and ſhine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee.* As in nature the Sun may be called the Father of Light, which ſtreams from it upon the Moon, and into the Air; ſo doth Light ſtream forth from God into Holy Angels, who were therefore called
2 Cor. 11. 13. *Angels of light*; and into Saints, who are called *Children of light.*
Luke 16. 8. But to return a little, to that Scripture in *Rom.* 12. 2. where Chriſtians are exhorted, to be *transformed by the renewing of their minds*; Be ye changed into another form or Image, in getting a new mind, or new light into the mind; ſo the Apoſtle elſewhere, *Be ye renewed in the ſpirit of your mind.* Natural men are
Eph. 4. 23. Eph. 5. 8. *darkneſs, their underſtandings are darkned*, and ſo are *alienated*
Eph. 4. 18. *from the life of God.* The minds of all men in their natural ſtate, are blinded by the God of this World, the Devil;
2 Cor. 4. 4. who hath great Power over the unbelieving World. Their mind, as to ſpiritual things, is like the *Chaos* in the begin-
Gen. 1. 2. ning of the World, or the face of the deep, *darkneſs is upon*

it.

it. But in a mans Converſion, God ſaith, *Let there be light, and there is light.* Light is the firſt work in the new Creature, as it was in the old. A converts eyes are opened as *Adams* and *Eves* were, to ſee his nakedneſs, and the filthineſs of his natural ſtate, which he never ſaw before. He now knows the vileneſs of ſin, and his own ſinfulneſs in his former condition. *Paul* knew when he was converted, how ſin had deceived him, and how ſin was exceeding ſinful; whereas, in his natural ſtate, he thought himſelf *blameleſs*, as that young man did, *Matth.* 19. A Sinner in his Converſion hath his eyes opened to ſee God *face to face*, as *Jacob* ſaid he had done. He now knows God, as he never knew him before, in his Holineſs, and Mercy, and Grace. And his eyes are opened to know Jeſus Chriſt, as it was ſaid of thoſe two Diſciples, *Luke* 24. He knows Chriſt, as he never knew him yet; he ſees that neceſſity of Chriſt, and Excellency in him, which he did not in his natural ſtate. Then he thought as the *Jews*, *There is no beauty in him, why we ſhould deſire him.* And he hath ſuch a ſight of the beauty of Grace and Holineſs, and the excellency and Power of the Scriptures, which he never yet had. There is no true convert, but can bear witneſs to all this. He hath a new Light indeed, ſo that all things are become new with him; Sin and Grace are other things in his eyes than they were formerly; God is another kind of God, and Chriſt another Chriſt, than he thought of in his natural ſtate.

Gen. 1 4. Gen. 3 7. Ezek 16. 63 Rom. 7. Phil. 3. 6. Gen. 32. 30 Iſa 53 2. 2 Cor. 5 17.

Queſt. But is there not many a natural man that hath more Knowledg of God, and of the Scriptures, than ſome converts have? Are there not many knowing learned men, not only in Nature, Philoſophy, and Politicks, but alſo in the Scriptures, and points of Divinity, and yet are wicked and ungodly men?

Anſ. I confeſs there is many a bad man that hath more hiſtorical Knowledg of God, and the Scriptures, than many godly men. Such men may be enlightened, may have the common Illumination of the Spirit, that after fall away. *Balaam* had an excellent Spirit of Prophecy. And *Lord, have we not prophecyed in thy name?* Say thoſe, whom Chriſt will not own. *Achitophel* was a man of great parts, he ſpake

Heb. 6. 4. Num. 22. 23, 24. Matth. 7 22.

as if a man had enquired at the oracles of God, 2 Sam. 16.

But godly men, even the meaneſt of them in reſpect of natural or acquired parts, have a knowledg of God, and of the things of God, which exceeds all that which others have; and that is, Experimental Knowledg of God, and the things
Pſal. 34. 8. of God: They *taſt and ſee that the Lord is gracious.* And ſo, that the Lord is Holy, and Merciful, and Righteous, which no natural man in the World doth; he hath not this taſt and ſight of God, that a Saint hath. The men that were with
Acts 9. 7. *Paul* at his Converſion, heard a voice, but they ſaw not him that ſpake, that is the Lord Jeſus, whom *Paul* ſaw; ſo hath every converted Sinner a ſight of God, and of the things of God, which no other man hath: *The natural man receiveth*
1 Cor. 2 14 *not the things of the ſpirit of God, neither can he, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* He cannot ſpeak of the things of the Spirit, by experience, as a ſpiritual man can do: *The ſpiritu-*
Verſe 15. *al man judgeth all things*; he can give a Judgment of ſpiritual things as well as of natural; becauſe *the ſpirit teacheth him*;
Verſe 10. John 14. he is the Spirits Pupil; *He ſhall teach you all things*, ſaith Chriſt. God revealeth theſe things to us by his ſpirit; and *the ſpirit ſearcheth all things, even the deep things of God.* A natural man judgeth of natural things; they are within his Sphere; but in ſpiritual things, he can only ſay *Sibboleth.* How ſimply did *Nichodemus*, a Doctor in *Iſrael*, reaſon with
John 3 4. Chriſt about Regeneration? *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a ſecond time into his mothers womb and be born?* Thus we find the Rulers of *Iſrael* looked on *Peter* and *John*,
Acts 4. 13. *as ignorant and unlearned men*; in the *Greek* it is *Ideots*, men of no Education; and yet it's ſaid, they marvelled at their boldneſs; the *Greek* word ſignifies not only confidence and fearleſneſs, but freedom of Speech and Elocution.

The Divine Knowledge of ſome godly men, otherwiſe of mean ability, is ſometimes amazing to others not unlearned.

All a natural mans light and learning, is but darkneſs to the light that a ſpiritual man hath in the things of God. Yea, the common gifts of the Spirit, for the edification of the
Heb. 6. 4. Church, are but darkneſs to the light, which Grace brings into the Soul, as Night is darkneſs to the day, even when the Moon is in the full. There is a Myſtery in the Knowledg of the Saints, they have things revealed to them, which none of the Princes

of

of this World have known, *Things that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of a man*, a natural man; even *the deep things of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 9, 10. *To you it is given to know the myſteries of the Kingdom of God.* Matth. 13. 11.

Queſt. But wherein doth the difference appear betwixt the common Illumination of the ſpirit, and the light that comes in with grace?

Anſ. A natural man may know the ſame things for matter, that a ſpiritual man knows; but not for manner; the one knows them ſpeculatively and hiſtorically: the other knows them Experimentally and powerfully; the one only knows them, but the other knows, that he knows them. 1 John. 2 3. The knowlege of the one lies in the upper Region the head; but the knowledge of the other, like *Aarons* Oyntment, runs down to his heart, and affections, and feet, that is, his converſation; he feels what he knows; he feels Goſpel truths, to be truths: he feels the goodneſs of them, and the power of them. His light is like the light of the Sun, a warming heating light, and full of influence both upon his heart and life. But there is no ſuch thing in the illuminations of natural men, tho it be the gift of the ſpirit; their knowledge is like *Rachel*, fair, but barren; they may know the will of God, and approve the things that are more excellent, and yet have but a form of knowledge, without any power. Rom. 2. 18. Whereas the light that comes in with grace, its a very powerful light, full of influence on the will, and the affections, and converſation. It is humbling light, as that which *Paul* ſaw was, for it diſcovers not only beams, as the light of nature and the common illumination of the ſpirit doth; that is, groſſer ſins, externall ſins; but it diſcovers moths, as the light of the Sun doth; and keeps a man continually in the view of heart-ſins, and the ſinfulneſs of his nature, and infirmities, yea iniquities of his holy things. Acts 9. This, converted Souls can teſtifie by their experience.

In a word, that knowledge and light in which men are renewed after the Image of God, it is a transforming light; we all, (all we believers) *with open face beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image from* 2 Cor. 3. 18.

glory

Gen. 30. 39. *glory to glory.* When *Labans* ſheep ſaw the party-coloured rods, it wrought ſo upon their fancies, as they had lambs like them. Surely the ſight a man hath of God in his converſion, hath a transforming power, much more wonderful. The eye of Faith looking upon the promiſes of the Goſpel, hath as
2 Pet. 1. 4. great a power in forming the Soul into the divine Image, as nature hath in any of her admired operations.

Thus much for that ſpritual wiſdome or knowledge, the firſt branch of the Image and likeneſs of God, to which a ſinner in his converſion is reſtored; as God is light, ſo is he.

CHAP. XIV.

Proceedeth further to ſhew, wherein a man, in his converſion, is reſtored to the Divine Image.

THe ſecond thing in Gods Image to which a ſinner in his converſion is reſtored, is Righteouſneſs; *And that ye*
Eph. 4. 24. *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs.*
Eccl. 7. 29. God made man upright. And in converſion, a man is ſo made again, as to his principle, and as to his operations, progreſſively, till he come to perfect rigeteouſneſs.

Now as the former part of Gods Image and likeneſs, Divine knowledge and light, is principally ſeated in the underſtanding, as natural light in the Sun; ſo this in the will. A man hath now a will conformable to the will of God, his will
Rom. 7. 22. keeps pace with the will of God: *I delight in the law,* or will
Pſal. 143. 10 *of God, as to the inward man. Teach me, O God, to do thy will.* It holds correſpondency with the whole will of God: *Then*
Pſal. 11. 6. *ſhall I not be aſhamed, when I have reſpect to all thy commands.*

Many Learned Men refer this righteouſneſs to the commands of the ſecond table; and ſo to Righteouſneſs towards men. But I conceive, that the Righteouſneſs of a Believer, is there ſtitude of the will, in anſwer to the whole will of God. The will now doth not pick and chuſe; but would ſtand *perfect*

fect and compleat in all the will of God. The will of men before conversion, is their worst faculty, *we will not hearken unto thee*, say the Jews, *but we will certainly do whatsoever goeth out of our own mouth.* But afterwards it is their best: *to will is present with me: and the good that I would do, I cannot.* Grace determines the will only to good. It is as extensive to its object, that is the will of God, as is the will of the Angels in Heaven: *thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

Col. 4. 12. Jer. 4. 16, 17. Rom. 7. 18, 19. Math 6. 10. Acts 9. 6.

Question. What is Gods personal righteousness?

Answer. It is the Rectitude of his will, and works; in answer to his Nature. God is his own Rule: and the Will of God is the rule of Righteousness in man; and this Righteousness is the Image of that in God: *I come to do thy will, O my God.* Now the will of a man upon his conversion, answers Gods will, as to the matter, manner, and end of all that he doth. In all which carnal men fail: they make sins of their own, besides what God makes: and they make those no sins, which God makes to be so; as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* made it a sin in Jesus Christ to heal that woman, *Luke* 13. 14. And so they made it a sin in his Disciples, that they *transgressed the traditions of the elders*: and Christ told them, that *they transgressed the commands of God by their traditions.* And such men make a Religion of their own; men, by nature, are addicted to will worship. *Dan* and *Bethel*, and green Trees, and Groves are chosen for places of worship; rather than *Jerusalem*, and the Altar of the Lord. Men are naturally inclined *to set up their posts by Gods posts.* And they are commonly their own motives and end in what they do; self-ends are their marks: *did ye at all fast unto me even unto me, saith the Lord? they do alms, and pray, and fast to be seen of men, and to have praise of men.*

Psal. 40. 7. Math. 15. Col. 2. 23. Ezek. 43. 8. Ezek. 7. 5. Matth 6.

But now there is a contrary spirit in men converted to God: they look to the will of God, to tell them what is sin, and what their duty; and would not make any thing of either, but what God makes such. And for manner, and ends of their works, still God is first and last with them. God made all things for himself; and they do, or would do all things for God,

Prov. 16. 4.

God, ultimately. They look at subordinate ends no farther than they have allowance from God, who is first and last with them in all: *But as of sincerity but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.* In conversion a sinner returns to an upright heart; *let my heart be sound in thy statutes.* *Job* was a perfect and upright man. There is no reigning guile in a gracious heart, as Jesus said of *Nathaniel, behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* And this is the second part of the Image and likeness of God, to which a sinner is restored in his conversion; he is *renewed according to him that created him,* or converted him, *in righteousness.* His Righteousness is like to Gods; like, for quality; tho not equality. Observe that in *John, every one that doth righteousness, is born of him.* And Chap. 3. 7. *He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as He is righteous*: and v. 10. *Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.* He maketh God his end in all he doth; and that by the Rule of his will. And tho his righteousness be still imperfect, yet it is progressive towards perfection, and rests not in any centre, till it comes to that point.

2 Cor. 2. 17.
Psal. 119. 80.
Job 1.
John 1.
John 1. 2, 9.

Thirdly, a sinner in his conversion is restored to the Image and likeness of God, in true Holiness. Put ye on the new man, which after God, or after his Image, *is created in true holiness.* Every convert is a new Creature: and conversion is another creation: *ye are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus.*

Eph. 4. 24.
2 Cor. 5. 17.
Eph. 2. 10.

But why doth the Apostle say, true Holiness?

First, in distinction from legal or ceremonial Holiness in the law; which was but a typical Holiness, a shadow of Holiness.

Secondly, in opposition to feigned Holiness, which Satan and Hypocrites may counterfeit. Satan may *transform himself into an angel of light*: and there may be *wolves in sheeps cloathing.*

2 Cor. 11. 13.
Matth. 7. 15.

Quest. What is Gods Holiness?

Ans. It is his essence; he is the Holy one, *Isa.* 57. 15. As Gods Righteousness is the rectitude of his will and works, in answer to his nature: so his Holiness is his nature or essence it self. And therefore as Gods Nature is incomprehensible, so is his Holiness. Our shell cannot measure this Ocean: Saints and

and Angels cannot fully define the Holineſs of God. As Aſtronomers, by their inſtruments, may gueſs at the meaſure of the Sun: ſo by the Scriptures, and our own hearts, if holy, we may gueſs at the Holineſs of God. Of all the Attributes of God, the Angels chiefly found out this; *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hoſts.* And this is it, that God ſwears by: *Once have I ſworn by my holineſs.* God is *Glorious in holineſs.* It is his pure Eſſence which admits of no impurity or defilement in himſelf, nor allows of any in man, but abhorreth it. *O Lord, thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canſt not look on iniquity.* God cannot ſee any thing that is impure; and nothing that is impure can ſee God: therefore ſaith our Saviour, *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God.* Sin and holineſs are the extreameſt and higheſt oppoſites that can be. Gods Holineſs is not ſo properly one Attribute, as the purity of all his Attributes.

Pſa. 6. 3. Pſa 89 35. Pſa 108. 7. Exod. 15 11. Hab. 1. 13. Matth. 5 8.

Queſt. What is that Holineſs in man by which he bears the Image of God?

Anſ. Holineſs is not any particular grace in the Saints, as Faith, or Love is; but is a pure Divine diſpoſition ſpreading itſelf through all the powers of the Soul. It is the Divine Nature that Saints are partakers of; Holineſs to the Lord, is written upon all their faculties So that as the Eternal power and Godhead may be ſeen in the creation: ſo the Purity, Mercy, Love, Truth, and Juſtice of God, may be ſeen in the Regenerate Nature of a man. And therefore, as the Righteouſneſs of man is the rectitude of his Will in anſwer to the revealed Will, or word of God; So Holineſs, properly taken, is the Rectitude of his Will and Nature in anſwer to the Divine Nature. So that it appears and manifeſteth it ſelf two ways,

2 Pet. 1. 4. Zech. 14 20. Rom. 1. 20.

Firſt. In a mans dedicating of himſelf to God and his uſe. As things and perſons, under the Law, when devoted and dedicated to Gods uſe, were called Holy: *I am thy ſervant; truly, I am thy ſervant.* Pſa. 116. 16. *The Macedonians gave themſelves to the Lord.* And, *God hath ſet apart for himſelf,* for his own uſe, *him that is godly.*

2 Cor. 8. 5. Pſa. 4. 3.

Secondly. It appears in his imitating of God. What was Gen. 5. 24. *Enoch's* holineſs, but his *walking with God*? And what was Numb. 14. *Joſhua's* holineſs; it was his *following the Lord fully*, his ſtriving 1 Cor. 11. 1. to imitate God. *Be ye followers of me, as I am of Chriſt*: in the Greek it is, be ye *Imitaters* of me as I am of Chriſt. And 1 John. 3. 3. the Apoſtle *John* ſaith *He that hath this hope, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure*. This then is the third part of the Image of God, to which a ſinner, in his converſion is reſtored. Nothing makes a man ſo like God, as holineſs: *Be ye holy*, 1 Pet. 1. 16. *as I am holy*. Nor one man, or one Angel, ſo unlike another.

Fourthly. A ſinner in his return to God, is made after the Divine Image, in another way than *Adam* was at firſt; he receives the Image of God, through a Mediator. It's through 2 Cor. 4. 6. or in *the face of Jeſus Chriſt, that the light of the knowledg of the glory of God, ſhineth into our hearts* The Apoſtle, it's likely alludes to the glory of God, which *Aaron* and *Iſrael* ſaw in *Moſes* his face, when he came down from the Mount. The children Exod. 34. 30. of *Iſrael* could not ſtedfaſtly behold the face of *Moſes* for the glory of his countenance; ſo that Chriſt, as Mediator, hath the glorious Image of God firſt upon himſelf, and from him it is communicated to us: *The word was made fleſh, and dwelt amongſt* John 1. 14. *us, and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth*. The glory of God, in *Moſes* his face, ſhone onely on *Iſraels* face; but the glory of God in Chriſt, ſhines into our hearts. And hence it is, that we are ſaid to be *of God, in Chriſt Jeſus*: and to be *the workmanſhip of* 1 Cor. 1. 30. *God, created in Chriſt Jeſus*; and, *it pleaſed the father, that in* Ephe. 3. 8. *him all fullneſs ſhould dwell; that from his fullneſs we may re-* Col 1. 9. *ceive grace for grace*. And he is ſaid to be *the everlaſting Fa-* John 1. 16. *ther*: in reſpect of God the Father, he is the everlaſting Son: Iſa. 9. 6. in reſpect of Believers, he is the everlaſting Father; he begets them to that likeneſs to himſelf, which ſhall never be loſt, as it was in the firſt *Adam* Believers are *predeſtinated to be conformed* Rom. 8 29. *to him: to bear the image of the heavenly*. And the Apoſtle, 1 Cor. 15. 49. to the *Galatians*, ſpeaks of *Chriſt formed* in men. So that Gal. 4 19. the *Scriptures* abound in the proof of this point, That the Image of God is conveyed to men, in their converſion, through Jeſus Chriſt. Even as the light

from

from the Sun, is, through the Air, to the World. And this is done,

First. Because God doth all for man, now, by a Mediatour. The Law was ordained in the hands of a Mediator, to shew, that Christ steps betwixt us and the condemning power of the Law. The Law, of it self, separates sinners from God; it takes no notice of their repentance; it stands upon satisfaction. Reas. 1. Gal. 3 19.

Repentance is a Gospel grace. It was Christ that ordered repentance and remission of sins, to be preached to the World: and it was repentance which he preached: *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* There is no transacting betwixt God and man, since the fall; but by a Mediator, a middle person that hath the nature of both, of God and man. I speak not of what God might have done by his absolute power; but of the way he hath constituted in which to deal with lost man, and that is, by a Mediator. He gave *Israel* his Law, in Tables of stone, by the hand of a Mediator, a Typical Mediator: and he gives not his Image to a mans heart, but in the face of *Jesus* the Mediator. Luke 24. 47. Matth. 4. 17.

Secondly, Believers receive the Image of God by Jesus Christ, that they may lose it no more. There is no stability in the nature of man, or Angels. But in Christ God-Man, there is: he is *a quickening spirit*; he keeps spiritual life in every Saint, as the fire of the Sanctuary was continually kept in. He is *the Father of eternity*: *The same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* If believers should have the Image of God formed in them onely as it was in *Adam*, at the first; they would lose it presently again. Man, of himself, is *unstable as water*, as it was said of *Reuben.* But receiving the Image of God, through Christ, he may call himself, in a sober sence, an Unchangeable Creature. Reas. 2. Job 4. 18. 1 Cor. 15. 45. Isa. 9. 7. Heb. 13. 8. Gen 49 4.

The Image of God indeed may be eclipsed in a Saint; but it still remains in him: as the Sun may be, yet keep its nature and motion in the Heavens. The Divine Nature, is not always alike apparent in any man: As Christs Divinity was sometimes more concealed and vailed, than at others.

Take the condition of a regenerate man in the whole, and it is an increasing condition, he goes from grace to grace, from faith to faith and from strength to strength; but take it apart, and look upon particular seasons, and we shall see Holiness, Faith Patience and other Graces, sometimes at an Ebb. As a Child, tho always in a Progressive motion to Manhood; yet, in some distemper, he may go back a little. But when the Distemper is over, he recovers the strength he had lost. So that the Image of God, being restored by Jesus Christ, can never be lost.

CHAP. XV.

Maketh application of the particulars which constitute The Divine Image.

I Shall now make Application of the several branches of this Image of God, to which a sinner in his conversion is restored: of which the first is Knowledge.

First, This informs us, what a dismal Doctrine that of *Rome* is, That Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion. They put out the poor Peoples eyes, that they may make sport with them; as the *Philistines* did by *Sampson*; yea, as the Devil doth by poor creatures whom he keeps ignorant of the truth, and whose *minds he blindeth*, that he may *lead them captive at his will.*

Judges 16.

2 Cor. 4. 6.
2 Tim 2. 26.

If divine knowledg be the Image of God; then certainly ignorance and blindness in the things of God, is the image of the Devil, who is *kept in chains of darkness.* The Devil hath knowledg, but its such as helps him to be more wicked: and so doth the knowledge of Natural men. But for that light, which lights a man through this World to Heaven, as the Pillar of fire did *Israel* towards *Canaan*; they have none of this in their minds. Let this be considered, that God speaks not more terribly to any kind of men, than to ignorant Souls: *They are a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them*

2 Pet. 2. 4.
Jude. 6.

Isa. 27. 11.

them will not ſave them; and he that formed them, will ſhew them no favour: this is *the condemnation*, the great damning ſin, *that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light*. The Lord Jeſus *ſhall be revealed from heaven in* John 3. 19. *flaming fire, taking vengance on them that know not God*: that is, 2 Theſ. 1. 7. God in Chriſt.

Secondly, Take heed of over curious knowledg. The nature of man is inclined to it: this moved our firſt Parents to eat of the forbidden Fruit, that their *eyes might be opened, and* Gen. 3. 5. *they be as Gods knowing good and evil*, Gen. 3. 5. It was curioſity that made the *Bethſhemites* look into the Ark, which was a dear ſight to them. That was a queſtion of curioſity put 1 Sam. 6. to Jeſus Chriſt, *Lord are there few that are ſaved*? But he Luke 13. 32. anſwered their queſtion by puting them upon their duty; *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able*. Of this nature was that queſtion of *Peter*; *Lord, what ſhall this man do*? And Chriſt anſwers him John 22. 21. with a check, *what is that to thee? follow thou me*. And ſo was that queſtion of the Diſciples after Chriſts reſurrection, *Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael*. For which he gives them a ſecret reproof: *It is not for you to know* Acts 2. 6. *the times and the ſeaſons, which the father hath kept in his own power*.

Seek not that knowledg, which puffeth up; but that which 2 Cor. 8. 2. edifieth. That which makes you know your ſelves, and that which putteth you on to inſtruct and edify others. You may ſafely enquire after the mind and ſenſe of God in his word; as the diſciples did deſire Jeſus to open his Parables to them. Matth 13. You may ſeek for more light to diſcover the worſt of your ſelves to you: *Lord, that which I ſee not, teach thou me*. And John 34. 32. Lord, *ſearch me and try my heart*; and you may ſeek for more Pſal. 139. 24. light to diſcover the beſt of Chriſt to you: Oh, that I may know him more and more, *and the power of his reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſufferings*. Phil. 3. 10.

Thirdly, Try your own knowledg in the things of God, whether it be ſuch as ſhews the Image of God to be renewed in you? If ſo, it is

1. A marvellous Light. *Ye are a choſen generation, a peculiar people, that you ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes of him that hath cal-* 1 Pet. 2. 9.

led

led you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light. It is light that dicovers marvellous things to you; things that you wonder at:

1 John. 3. 1. John 14. 22. *Behold what manner of love the father hath ſhewed us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God. How is it Lord, that thou wilt manifeſt thy ſelf to us, and not to the world?*

2. Its a powerful light: It is ſtill changing you more and more into the likeneſs of God. Obſerve the Apoſtles words,

v. 15. 2 Cor. 3. 18. *We all,* (all we that believe) *with open face* (having the vail pulled off our hearts which was over the hearts of the Jews) *beholding as in a glaſs* (in the Goſpel) *the glory of the Lord* (The Holineſs of the Lord who is glo-

Exod. 15. 11. Exod. 34. 6, 7. rious in Holineſs; and his rich mercy, free grace, and long-ſuffering towards ſinners, the Glory which he ſhewed *Moſes*) *are changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory.* (Spiritual light is a powerful transforming light (it changes a man into the likeneſs of the object it looks upon; there is the power of the Holy Ghoſt in it; as it follows) *as by the ſpirit of the Lord.*

3. It's a quickning warming light, like that of the Sun:

Pſal. 9. 11. John. 4. 10. It quickens Grace, quickens to duty, ſets faith on work: *they that know thy name, will put their truſt in thee*: And it ſets prayer on work: *If thou kneweſt the gift of God, and who it is that talks with thee, thou wouldeſt have aſked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* So *Pauls* light from

Acts 9. 11. Chriſt, put him upon prayer preſently, *behold he prayeth.*

Job 42. 6. 4. It's an humbling Light: *Now mine eyes have ſeen thee; wherefore I abhor my ſelf in duſt and aſhes.* The light that *Saul* ſaw about him, caſt him down: and the Light which ſhone within him, more; no man from thence-forth had more ſelf-abaſing thoughts than he, who looked on himſelf to have

2 Tim. 1. 14. Eph. 3. 8. been before his converſion, as the greateſt of ſinners; and after, *to be leſs than the leaſt of all Saints.*

Exod. 10. 21. 5. It is Experimental Light, it is Light that is felt; as it is ſaid of the darkneſs in *Egypt*, that it was felt: Regenerate men have an Experimental Knowledg of God; not only to be

John 20. 28. v. 17. God, but their God: *My God*, as *Thomas* ſaid; and as Chriſt ſaid, *I aſcend to my father, and your father, to my God and your God.* And they have an Experimental Knowledg of the Scriptures to be the word of God as *Jeremiah* ſaid, *His word was*

in

in my heart, as a burning fire. They feel God in them, and the Word of God, and Christ in them; *not I, but Christ liveth in me.* And they feel the Spirit in them, as he said, *The spirit within me constraineth me.* They know the difference betwixt Sin and Grace by experience. Gal. 2. 20. Job 32. 18.

2. For Application of the second Branch of Gods Image, to which Believers are restor'd, that is, Righteousness.

And 1. This informs us of the vast difference betwixt a Natural and Regenerate mans will, in relation to the Will of God. The former Wills, and walketh contrary to God: *We will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* He contends with God for his will; so that if he could, he would always do contrary to the will of God: *O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?* If thou mightest have thy will, thou wouldst never be made clean. *How long shall vain thoughts lodg within thee?* It implies she would ever have it so. *This people is slidden back by a perpetual, or* an eternal *backsliding.* It was a saying of an Ancient, *That a natural man would live for ever, that he might sin for ever.* Jer. 18. 12. Jer. 13. 27. Jer. 4. 14. Jer. 8. 5.

And when Convictions trouble a Carnal man, as sometimes they do, unless he is past feeling; then he wisheth that this and that were not Gods Will, and that sin were not sin: As *Naaman* said, *In this thing, the Lord pardon thy servant, when I bow down my self in the house of Rimmon:* This is the best temper of a natural man, as to the will of God. But a true convert hath a will of another temper; such a mans will is lost or swallowed up in Gods Will. What Saints and Angels do in Heaven, that he Wills on Earth. There is some thing of a glorified Will in a Saint here; a Will to Sin no more: as a natural man would sin always, so a regenerate man would not sin at all: and this Will is taken for their Deed; God so takes it, when the impediment cannot be removed: *If there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* 2 Kings 5. 18. 2 Cor. 8. 12.

A Regenerate man is not only conformed to the Will of God, but he is transformed into it; It is not only in his actions, but in his heart and mind. *I will write my laws in their hearts,* and *Thy law is within my heart, and the law of his God is* Heb. 8. 10. Psal. 40. 8.

Pſal. 37. 31. Col. 4. 12 Pſal. 119 6. *is in his heart.* So that his Will ſtands to all the Will of God or as the *Original*, he is filled with the Will of God. *Then ſhall I not be aſhamed, when I have reſpect to all thy commandments.*

And as his Will is to do all the Will of God, ſo it is always thus; he would always do all the Will of God: *I*

Pſ. l. 119. 112. *have inclined my heart or will to do thy ſtatutes always, even to the end.*

Neither is the Will forced, but free in it: the Affections joyn with the Will; there is a longing deſire to do the Will

Pſal. 119. 5. of God. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy ſtatutes*; there is deſire with delight: *I delight to do thy will, O my God.*

Pſal. 40. 8. John 4. 34. He ſaith, as Chriſt did, tho he can but liſp, *My meat is to do the will of him that ſent me.* And *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that ſent me.* I

John 6. 38. came into the World to do the Will of God. When the fleſh is weak, yet the Spirit is willing; his genius and property is

Rom. 12. 2. to be proving *what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* Even the will of a regenerate man, tho it comes not into action, is better than the moſt ſpecious deeds of a na-

Zech. 3. 8. tural man. And when he is tempted by Satan, who is at his right hand, as at *Joſhua's*, or by ſin that dwelleth in him,

Romans 7. this is his grief, and makes him groan as *Paul* did. And he exceedingly grieves, when other men walk contrary to the Will of God; with *David*, his *eyes run down with tears, becauſe*

Pſal. 119. 136. *men keep not his laws.* This is more than *Adam* did in his Innocency: Had he been affected with *Eves* diſobedience, he would not have followed her example, but have ſaid to her, as *Joſeph* to his Miſtreſs, *How ſhall I do this wickedneſs, and*

Geneſis 39. *ſin againſt God?* Or as the Lord to *Moſes*, *Let it ſuffice thee,*

Deut 3. 26. *ſpeak no more to me of this matter.* Oh my Brethren, look to your hearts in this point: *He that doth righteouſneſs, is righ-*

1 John 3. 7, 10. *teous, even as he is righteous; whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God.*

The will of a natural man is his ruin: *Voluntas tua, infernus eſt tuus*, ſaid *Bernard*; his Will is his Hell. The more of a mans will there is in ſin, the more like he is to the Devil.

Heb. 10. 26. And as wilfulneſs is the greateſt Aggravation of Sin, ſo to be given up to it, is the greateſt Judgment: *I gave them up*

Pſal. 81. 12. *to their own hearts luſts, and they walked in their own counſel.*

Oh

Oh then obſerve, how your will anſwers to the Will of God. Let this be the ſtated, and the only Rule of all you do. And ſo likewiſe, of all you wiſh and pray for; that Gods commands may be obeyed, and his Promiſes and Propheſies be fulfill'd.

3*ly*. For Application of the third Branch of God's Image, to which every regenerate man is conformed, *viz*. True Holineſs.

And let every one ſee to it, that he carries this Eminent part of Gods Image in his Soul: *As he that hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy.* Holineſs is that, which makes the difference betwixt an Angel and a Devil, betwixt Saints in Heaven, and the Damned in Hell. If you be not holy, you bear not Gods Image, but the Devils; *You are of your father the Devil.* 1 Pet. 1. 15. John 8. 44.

Oh, look after the Divine Nature in your ſelves. The higheſt natural Parts, and the greateſt ſpiritual Gifts, and the ſweeteſt moral Virtues alone, make no man Holy; thoſe things amount not to Holineſs, no more than all the Fire and Torches on Earth, and all the Light in the Moon and Stars, can make it day. Had a man the greateſt natural Parts, and ſpiritual Gifts in the World; could he ſpeak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, (as *Herod* did); had he the gift of Prophecy (as *Balaam* had); did he underſtand all Myſteries, had he all Knowledg for the Interpratation of Scripture-Myſteries; (a gift of the Spirit in the Apoſtles days) and beſides this, had he all Faith, (Faith of Miracles in the higheſt degree) ſo that he could remove Mountains; yet all this would not amount to Holineſs. There are, that have theſe, whom Chriſt will not own. 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2. 1 Cor. 14. 26. Matt. 7. 22, 23. Mark 10. 21.

Theſe may make a man uſeful to others, and ſo far lovely, as that Moraliſt was to Jeſus, who beheld and loved him. But told him withal, *one thing thou lackeſt.* All theſe may be without Holineſs. For Holineſs, as the Schoolmen well deſcribe it, is a mans applying his Mind and Actions to the Imitation of God in his Nature and Works.

Be ye followers, or imitators *of God, as dear children.* Let the Divine Nature manifeſt it ſelf in you, by your loving that which he loves, and hating that which he hates: *Thou hateſt*

Rev. 2. 15. *the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* My Brethren, see that you dedicate your selves to God, *as a kind of first fruits of his creatures.* That God have the greatest use of you, of your inward man, and your outward man.

Jam. 2. 18.

True Holiness hath a double Seat, In the heart; *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* And in the life; *Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* If you seem never so holy in your outward deportment, and be not pure in heart, have not a holy Mind, a holy Will, and holy Affections; if the chief and choicest object of these, be not a Holy God, and Holy Things; all your external Holiness is nothing; It's but the carcase of Holiness without the Soul and Life of it. God is a Holy Spirit, and his converse is with Holy Spirits, in which he seeth his own Image.

Matth. 5. 8. 1 Pet. 1. 15.

But this Image must be visible to others in your Holy Conversation. If you be Holy within, you will also be Holy without. A Candle in a Lanthorn shines without it, as well as within it. If a man have a modest mind, it will appear in his Countenance. You cannot conceal Holiness in your Bosome; It will not be imprisoned. A Holy man is like a transparent Medium. You may see that *of a truth God is in him.* Where there is a Holy Principle, there will be Holy operations: as Light in the Sun will appear in rays and beams in the Air.

1 Cor 14.

And if you would bear Gods Holy Image more resplendently, comenearer to God, and keep nearer to him: *It's good for me to draw near to God.* You know how the Glory of God shone on *Moses* his face, by being with him on the Mount. Did we walk more with God, we should be a more Holy People, and the Glory of God would break forth upon us. It will make you more Holy, to converse with Holy Men: much more if you converse with the Holy One, with him that is Holiness it self, the Fountain of Holiness, as well as the fountain of Life. As the Moon, the more she gets from under the shadow of the Earth, receives more and more Light from the Sun, till she comes to the full: so a Saint, the farther he removes from the World, and the nearer he comes to the dissolution of his mortal part, he becomes more and more Holy, till at last he shines all over in perfect Glory.

Psal. 73. 28. Exod. 34. 29.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, To make some application of the fourth particular. That we receive not the Image of God immediately from him, as *Adam* did; but through the face of Jesus Christ: the Children of *Israel* saw the glory of God, but it was in *Moses* his face: and a sinner in his conversion receives the Image of God through the Face of Jesus Christ; *He hath shined into our hearts the light of the knowledg of the glory of God* in the Face of Jesus Christ. Of Christ who is *the image of the invisible God, who is the brightness of his fathers glory, and the express image of his person.* Col. 1. 15. John 14. 9. Heb. 1. 3.

God hath intrusted Christ, as Mediator, with his image, to make the impression of it where he will: *The Son quickeneth whom he will. The father hath given all things into the Sons hand.* He is Lord Keeper, and chief Secretary; he is in his Fathers Bosome. And he is Master of Requests: *He appears in the presence of God for us.* The knowledg by which men are renewed to the Image of God, is in Christ: *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledg.* And what Righteousness or rectitude of will we have towards the will of God, we must have it from him: he is *Jesus Christ the righteous; and every one that doth righteousness, is born of him.* If ye be *filled with the fruits of righteousness*, it must be *by Jesus Christ.* Christ is a pattern to us of that Righteousness of which the Light of Nature, and the Law of *Moses* were not, as in self-denial, love to enemies, love to sinners, love to Saints; I have given you an example, *that ye should love one another, as I have loved you.* And therefore he calls it *a new commandment.* And so if we would have more Holiness from God, we must have it by Jesus Christ; He is *the Holy one*, and *the most Holy*; In the Hebrew it is, the Holiness of Holiness; Holiness it self, and the treasury of all the Holiness designed us by God the Father; indeed what the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple, was but a shadow of. John 5. 21. John 3. 35. John 1. 18. Heb. 9. 24. Col. 2. 3. 1 John 2. 1. v. 29. Phil. 1. 11. John 13. 34. Acts 3. 14. Dan 9. 24.

And this may encourage us to look to Christ, by proper acts of faith, for more Holiness. He hath designed by his Death; to present us Holy to his Father. And God hath *chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy.* So that here is work for faith; let this Eye be fixed on the Face of Jesus Christ, for more of his glorious Holiness to shine into our hearts. There Col. 1. 22. Eph. 1. 4.

are other objects of Faith, but Christ is the chief. Oh let Faith make you lean on Jesus his Bosome. Vision will make
1 John 3. 2. us like him in Heaven; and faith will make us like him here. *Moses* made all things according to the Pattern he received.
Heb. 8. 5. And Christ is our pattern; we must be, and do, like him: *He*
1 Pet. 2. 21. *hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps.* Oh let this point have place in your Prayers, place in your meditations; let it be one of the great objects of your faith, and of your affections. It is the design of Satan, to interrupt you
2 Cor. 4. 4. in this very thing: *Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into you.*

Let us consider how much Christ pressed his Disciples, and in them, us also to make use of him, when he was gone in our nature to the Father; then saith he, *I will pray the father*; And *I will send the spirit, and he shall receive of mine and shew it*
John 14. *unto you*: and *whatsoever you shall ask in my name, I will do it*: I will see it shall be done, you shall not lose your labour. Oh be followers of Christ; transact with God by Christ. This is the mark by which God knows his own, in the croud of
Rev. 14. 4. the World, That *they are followers of the Lamb.* They are bought from amongst men, being *the first fruits* to God, and to the Lamb.

CHAP. XVI.

Insisteth on the second Particular, wherein a true Convert returns to God; which is Communion with him.

I Come now to the second thing, wherein Man in his Conversion returns to God; and that is, to Acquaintance and Communion with God. The former fits him for this; he is re-made to the Image of God, that he may injoy Communion with him; his chief happiness now, as it was in his state of Innocency. God made not mans Soul, as he did his Body;
Gen. 2, 7. this was of the Earth, that was from Heaven, the breath, the

the Image of God, whose *delights now were with the sons of men.* By the fall, man lost this Blessedness. *He hid himself from the presence of the Lord:* He fell from Communion with God, to converse with the Devil. Man in his natural state is a great stranger to God, he lives as without God in the World; but at his Conversion, his Acquaintance and Communion with God are renewed; he is no more a stranger. He can now speak of that Scripture by experience, *The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.* And so of that, *Truly our fellowship is with the father, and with the son Jesus Christ.* He is now the Friend of God, as God called *Abraham*; and Christ his Disciples; *Ye are my friends*, intimate, bosome Friends.

Prov. 8. 31. Gen. 3. Eph. 2. 12. Eph. 2. 19. Rev. 21. 3. 1 John 2. 3. Isa. 41. John 15. 14.

Quest. But what is Acquaintance and Communion with God?

Ans. It is a sweet agreement betwixt God and our Faculties. Betwixt God and our thoughts: *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* Betwixt God and our Affections: *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* When we taste sweetness in the Creature, this is a kind of Communion with it. *Truly the light is sweet*, when the object is sutable to the Eye, this is a kind of Communion betwixt them. So when God is a sutable good to the Heart and Affections, this is Communion with God. Or to speak more fully, when God works by Divine Influence on our Souls, and our thoughts as the effect hereof, work much, and with delight on God. As Communion betwixt Man and Man, is when they take Complacency in one another, as *Jonathan* and *David* did, their Souls were knit to one another. So God and Saints take delight in one another: He desires to hear their Voice, and to see their Face, and they delight to see his: *Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* And *Lord, shew us thy face.* And they delight to hear his Voice; *I will hear what God the Lord will say.* A contrary Spirit to that in *Adam*, when he had lost Commmunion with God, *I heard thy voice, and was afraid.* This is a Riddle to a natural man; but after his Conversion, God meets him as he did *Jacob.*

Psal. 104. 34. Psal. 73. 25. Eccl. 7. 1 Sam. 18. Cant. 2. 14. Psal. 4. 6. Psal. 80. Psal. 85. 8. Gen 3. 10.

Hoſea 12. 4. *cob* in *Bethel*, and there ſpeaks with him. The Lord paſſeth by
Exod. 34. 6. him, as he did by *Moſes*, and ſhews him his Glory; he makes him to know Him by his own experience, to be *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs, and truth, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin.* And
Pſal. 63. 5. 6 hereupon his thoughts are much with God; *My ſoul ſhall be ſatisfied as with marrow and fatneſs, when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.* He feeth God with a delightful wonder in his works: *This is the Lords doing, and it is*
Pſal 118 23 *marvellous in our eyes.* He is intimately acquainted with the word
Pſal 37. 31. of God, it is *in his heart*, and *in his mind*, and *it abideth in him.*
Heb. 8 10. He well knows God in his Promiſes; he feels many of them
1 John 2. 14. fulfilled in himſelf, as *Solomon* ſaid, *Bleſſed be the Lord, that*
1 Kings 8. 56. *hath given reſt to his people Iſrael, according to all that he promiſed, there hath not failed one word of all his good promiſe, which he promiſed by the hand of Moſes his ſervant.* And as *David* ſaith, *Thou haſt dealt well with thy ſervant, O Lord, ac-*
Pſal 119. 65. *cording to thy word.* But as his likeneſs to God, ſo his Communion with him, is eminently dependant on Jeſus Chriſt.
Eph 1. 4. He knows, that God *choſe him in Chriſt*, and that God is
2 Cor. 5. 19. *reconciled to him in Chriſt*, and that he is *the workmanſhip of*
Eph. 2. 10. *God, created in Chriſt Jeſus*, and that he is *of God in Chriſt*;
Eph. 1. 16. and that he is *the righteouſneſs of God in Chriſt.* He ſeeth the
2 Cor. 5. 21. Father in the Son, and he knows the Father, *as the ſon re-*
John 14. 9. *vealeth him.*
Matth. 11. 27. This is the moſt excellent and comfortable way of knowing God. The knowledg of God out of Chriſt, is as a mans looking immediately upon the Sun in its Glory, it dazles and hurts the ſight. We know how terrible God was to *Iſrael* without a Mediator: *Oh ſpeak thou with us from God,*
Exod. 20. 19. *but let not God ſpeak with us, leſt we die*; and *Moſes* was a type of Chriſt therein.

To know God out of Chriſt, is to dwell as it were, *with devouring fire*, and *with everlaſting burnings*, Iſa. 33. 14. All our boldneſs towards God, is by Jeſus Chriſt. Epheſ. 3. 12. *In whom we have boldneſs, and acceſs with confidence, by the faith of him. Having ſuch an high Prieſt, let us go with boldneſs to the Throne of grace*, Heb. 4. 16. Yet withal, the more holy and gracious Converts are, the more familiar God will be with them. *Aarons* ſin about the golden Calf, had begot ſome ſtrangeneſs in God to him, he might not come ſo nigh God as *Moſes* did: nor

Jobs

Jobs friends ſo nigh as himſelf: Job 41. 8. *My ſervant Job ſhall pray for you, for him will I accept.* *Abraham* muſt go up to the Mount, but his Servants muſt ſtay at the bottom of it. And onely three of Chriſts Diſciples muſt go with him to ſee his glory, *Peter*, *James*, and *John*; altho there were ſome particular reaſons why they, and not the reſt: they were to ſee his Agony, as well as his Glory: and *Peter* was to die a ſignal death for him; *John* 21. 18, 19. And *James* was the firſt that loſt his life for him, *Acts* 12. 1. And *John* was to maintain the Divinity of Chriſt, againſt many Anti-Chriſts in his days, 1 *John* 2. 22.

Application. Firſt, This informs us, that acquaintance with God, is more than a bare knowledge of God. We may know a man that we have no acquaintance or intimacy with: the *Heathens* knew God, *Rom.* 1. 21. yet were very ſtrangers to him. The Devils knew Jeſus, *We know thee who thou art, the holy one of God*, Mark 1. 24. Acquaintance with God ariſeth from likeneſs to him; when a man is, or endeavours to be holy, as he is holy. *Adam* was firſt made after Gods likeneſs, and then had communion with him: it implies friendſhip and familiarity; *Abraham my friend*: and, *ſhall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?* Now, there are frequent interviews betwixt God and the Soul: *I have ſet the Lord always before me, ſaith David*, Pſal. 16. 8. as the Angels do, Matth. 18. 10. and God ſet *David before his face for ever*, Pſal. 41. 12. Now God and the Soul face one another, as the Cherubims did, that were over the Mercy-Seat. If you know God to purpoſe, you will greatly deſire to have ſecret, ſolemn, and comfortable converſe with him. And if you have had it, and now want it, you will ſigh, and wiſh with *Job*, Job 29. 2. *Oh that I were as in months paſt, when the ſecret of God was upon my tabernacle, when the Almighty was with me.* Oh then, when *we took ſweet counſel together*, as *David* and his familiar friend did, Pſal. 55. 14. when I went with God to his houſe, as they did: and when he met with me in *Bethel*, and there ſpake with me. True Converts they have frequent ſoliloquies or diſcourſes with themſelves about God, and much diſcourſe in meditation and prayer with God, as *Iſaac* had; he kept ſecret correſpondency with God; he *went out into the field to meditate*, and to pray. And

2 Chron. 22. Gen. 18.

Hoſ. 12. 4.

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ſo *Enoch* is ſaid *to walk with God.* If thou art as one of theſe, thou wilt *go to thy Father in ſecret*, Matth. 6. 6. and when thou art alone, God will joyn himſelf to thee, as *Philip* did to the Eunuch, Acts 8. God will *allure thee into the wilderneſs*, a lonely place, on purpoſe to *ſpeak to thy heart.*

Secondly. This ſhews us, what a bleſſed ſtate the converſion of a ſinner brings him into: he that was a far off, is now brought nigh to God. Tho he be not taken up into the third Heavens, as *Paul* once was; yet his affections are taken up thither: and his converſation is there; he is raviſhed, as *Solomon* was, when he ſaid, Will God indeed dwell with men? This was amazing to *Solomon*, and ſo it is to every true Convert; *I will dwell in them, and waalk in them, and they ſhall be my people, and I will be their God.* The original is very emphatical, ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς I will indwell in them; there are two In's, as if God could never have enough communion with them. God doth not onely dwell with a gracious Soul, but in him: he is *the Temple of God*, 2 Cor. 6. 16. As the Prieſts and *Levites* had rooms in the Temple, and were alwayes imployd there; ſo is God in a ſanctified Soul, he takes up rooms there, and is always buſying himſelf there: *Behold, I dwell with him that is of an humble and a contrite ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* There he communicates his ſecrets; *Pſal.* 25. 14. there he writes his Law; *Heb.* 8. 10. there he ſheds abroad his love, *Rom.* 5. 5. He acquaints ſuch a Soul with much of his mind, which he hides from others: *Thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes. A ſervant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but ye are my friends, and all things that I have received of my father, I have made known to you.* As Chriſt is in the boſom of the Father; ſo may the ſervants of Chriſt lean on his boſome, as *John* did. A godly mans acquaintance with God, gives him boldneſs and confidence toward him: his heart dares ſafely truſt in him, *Prov.* 31. 11. he dares truſt God further than he ſees him. *Whoſo walketh in darkneſs and ſeeth no light, let him truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God.* Yea, when God ſeems to forſake him, Job 13. 15. *Tho he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him.* He knows God by his name *Elſhadai*, God All-ſufficient, *Gen.* 17. 1. and by his name *Jehovah*; he can cry, *Abba father*: he can ſay, *ſtill hope in God, he is the health of my counte-*

2 Cor. 12. Phil. 3. 1.

Iſa. 57. 15. Matth. 11. 25.

John 15. 15. John 1. 18.

1 John 3. 21. Pſal. 9. 10.

countenance, and my God. He is acquainted with the power of God, the Wisdom, Truth, Goodness, and Mercy of God; he knows all these Attributes of God by experience; he knows God to be *the father of mercies*: he can say as *Paul, I was a blasphemer* &c. *Yet I obtained mercy*: He can say very sensibly *where sin abounded, there grace aboundeth much more.* But (as the Apostle said in another case) the time would fail me to tell you all the happiness which a good man hath by communion with God: as the Queen of *Sheba* said to *Solomon*, No man can tell you the one half of what the Scriptures, and his own experience speak. Communion with God, is called in the origional, κοινωνία, which sometimes signifies, partnership; as if all things were common betwixt God and a good man. *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ.* Psal. 42. 11. 1 Tim. 1. 13 Rom. 5. 20. 1 King. 10. 7. John 1. 3.

As such a man gives himself to God; so God gives himself to him. As *Jonathan* stripped himself of his Robe, and gave it to *David*, and his Garments, even to his Sword, and his Bow, and his Girdle: so saith God, *O Israel, I am thy God*; thou returning Soul, I am thine, and all that I have is thine: my Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness, and Mercy, and Grace are thine. 2 Cor. 8. 5.

Thirdly, This also sheweth us the sad condition of natural men, whose acquaintance and converse is not with God, but with sinners like themselves, and with Satan; as *Eves* was in the fall. There are some who have converse with Satan, wittingly and willingly, as conjures, sorcerers, and witches; they converse with familiar spirits, as *Manasseh* did. There is such familiarity betwixt the Devil and this kind of men, as extends to indentures and covenants; and against these, God made several penal Laws, even to Death. And all other natural men have real converse with Satan, tho ignorantly: He is *the spirit that worketh in all the children of disobedience.* And the way he takes to correspondence with them, is as the *Philistines* dealt with *Sampson*; first to blind them, and then to make sport with them. Satan and Natural Men have fellowship in the works of Darkness. *Elimas* learned his mischievous subtilty of the Devil. As among evil company, one commonly leads another; and as regenerate men are led by the Spirit of God; *As many as are led by the spirit of* 2 King 21. 6. Lev. 20. 27. Eph. 2 2. Judges 6.

God, they are the ſons of God: ſo natural men are led by the evil Spirit: they are of his company, and he hath his way of converſe and familiarity with them; they are ſaid to be *led captive by him at his will*: he leads them by the noſe. As the Spirit of God puts good motions into the Hearts of Saints; ſo Satan puts evil motions into the hearts of ſinners. He put it into the Heart of *Judas* to betray Chriſt. Yea, as the Spirit of God enters into good men; *He is with you, and ſhall be in you*; So the Devil into bad; as he did into *Judas*.

John 13 2. John 14. 17. John 13 27.

Feurthly, This point ſerves to Exhortation. All you that have the work of Grace on your hearts, and are thereby taken into fellowſhip with God: Oh priſe your Privileds, and live in the enjoyment of it. If you have taſted how ſweet the company of God is, you will not be content without it. The Spouſe was reſtleſs, till ſhe had met again with her Beloved, and then ſhe was at reſt. My Brethren, to live in Communion with God, is the only way you can take, that your joy may be full: *Theſe things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* And what things were theſe? *That ye alſo may have fellowſhip with us, and truly our fellowſhip is with the father, and with his ſon Jeſus Chriſt.* And this joy Chriſt ſpake much of to his Diſciples, *Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. Ask, and you ſhall receive, that your joy may be full.*

Cant. 3. 1 Joh. 1. 2, 3. John 15. 11. John 16. 24.

Queſt. But how is the Joy of ſuch men full?

Anſ. It is full in compariſon with the joy we can have in the Creature. *Thou haſt made my heart more glad, by the light of thy countenance, than theirs whoſe corn and wine increaſe.* What is all the light of Candles and Torches, to the light of the Sun? And it is full joy in reſpect of thoſe Eclipſes, which the Joy of many other Chriſtians, who keep not up a conſtant courſe of Communion with God, doth frequently ſuffer. Oh, be daily converſing with Gods Attributes, as reveaſed in his word; his word of command, and his word of Promiſe. And in his works; his works in the World, and in the Church, and with immediate reſpect to your ſelves. And for this, be as much alone as you can. It was ſaid of a ſerious Philoſopher, that he converſed more with the gods, than with men. Eve-

Pſal 4. 7.

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ry Christian should endeavour, that this may be more truly said of himself, That he hath more to do with God, than Men; so had *Enoch*, who had the Testimony of the Holy Ghost, that he walked with God.

You that have callings, will hardly think this feasible; and indeed it will be no easie task. *Hagar* crowed over her Mistress; when *Abraham* gave her an Inch, she would have an Ell. And so your Worldly imployments, if you are not careful, will jostle out your heavenly. But to these, the former must give the right hand of fellowship. Communion with God is that great business which must govern all other Affairs. This is the *Primum Mobile*, the highest Sphere that must overrule all the inferior; and if they follow not this, their motion will be erratick. Tho the things of the World may not interrupt your Communion with God; yet Communion with God may, and must intermingle with all other business: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* Genesis 16. 1 Cor. 10 37.

Remember these two things. *First*, That Prayer is a Duty, which maintains Communion with God; we grow familiar with God by Prayer, who appears much to a praying Person: He did so to Christ, when he was praying, he was transfigured. And God appeared to *Jacob* when he was praying, and so to *Moses*. Those that are serious praying Persons, cannot but have some experience of the Presence of God with them; especially, in secret Prayer. *Secondly*, Remember to love Jesus Christ much: For, saith he, *If any man love me, I will manifest my self to him, and my father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.* Luke 9. 20. Genesis 32. Joh. 14.21,23.

Quest. Why do many true Converts walk so much without the sight of God and Communion with him? God is as a stranger to them, as the Prophet speaks. Yea, sometimes as an enemy. And indeed, Gods deserting a gracious Soul, is as if he rained Hell from Heaven. Jer. 14.8. Lam. 2. 5

Ans. Gods ordinary withdrawings, are upon some failures on our part: *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you. I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledg their offence, and* Isa. 59. 1.

Hoſ. 5. 14. *ſeek my face.* *Davids* ſelf-confidence, put God to withdraw from him: *In my proſperity I ſaid, I ſhall never moved; thou*
Pſal. 30. 7. *didſt hide thy face, and I was troubled.* So the Spouſe, her ſe-
Cant. 5. 2. curity cauſed Chriſt to withdraw from her.

But Gods extraordinary withdrawings from holy men, are upon other accounts. As firſt, that they may in ſome meaſure be conformable to Jeſus Chriſt, even in this point;
Matth. 27. they muſt taſte of that cup which he drank of: *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Yet obſerve, That Chriſt queſtioned not his being the Son of God, in the depth of his deſertion.

Judg 2. *Secondly,* God doth it to prove them, as he did *Iſrael,* to
1 Pet 1. 7. prove their Faith; that they can ſee by Faith, when not by ſight;
2 Cor. 5. 7. and to prove the Devil a liar, who tells God, that if he withdraws, they will withdraw, as in *Jobs* caſe.

But God is alſo preſent, when we know it not, as he was
Gen. 28. with *Jacob*: and as Jeſus was with the two Diſciples. If you
Luke 24. have his gracious influence, you have his preſence. *Did not*
Luke 24. 32. *our hearts burn within us,* ſay the Diſciples that Chriſt converſed with? In a word, God withdraws ſometimes from his people for a time, that he may fit them for more endearing and ſweeter Communion with him, than ever they had before, as *Paul* ſaid to *Philemon*, of *Oneſimus*; *He perhaps departed for a ſeaſon, that thou ſhouldeſt receive him for ever.* Truly ſo ſaith God, *For a ſmall moment have I forſaken thee, but with*
Iſa. 54 7. *great mercy will I gather thee.* God may hide his Face from
Gen. 42. thee, when his heart is towards thee, as *Joſeph*'s was towards his Brethren, when he ſpake roughly to them.

Conſider and remember, that the more you live in Acquaintance and Communion with God, the leſs you will need the Creature; as the Sun comprehends the Light of all other Luminous Bodies. And ſo much for the ſecond Particular, to which a Sinner in his Converſion is reſtord, *viz.* Communion with God.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Insisteth on the Third and Fouth Particulars, wherein a Convert returns to God. Viz. A due subjection to him: and, A Spiritual Dominion over the Creature.

I Begin with the former of these, Subjection to God. And this is more than what *Adam* could bring himself to, in his first estate: he had but one command of tryal, yet could not bear that yoke. *Abraham* had two, and they both were harder than that given to *Adam*: God bad him get him out of his Countrey, and from his kindred, and from his Fathers house, he knew not whither. And he also commanded him to offer his Son *Isaac*, his only Son, and Son of the promise, and he submitted to both. Gen. 12 1. Heb. 11. 8. Gen. 22. 1.

Natural men cannot bear this yoak. When Christ gave that young man a command of tryal, Matth. 19. 21. *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; he went away sorrowful, because of his great possessions.* Men by nature, would have God to do nothing to them, but what suits with their own mind. The reliques of this remains in the regenerate; but grace doth much break them of it: *If the Lord say, he hath no pleasure in me; behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good to him*: conversion doth not quite heal the sore of discontent at trying Providences. *Moses* would fain have gone over *Jordan*, to have seen the good Land; but God would not let him: *Let it suffice thee*, saith God to him; *speak no more to me of this matter, for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.* And *James*, and *John*, would fain have had fire from Heaven, upon those that carried it so basely towards Jesus Christ, Luk. 9. 54. And *Luther* said of *Melanthon*, that he would fain have been governing and ordering the world, and the affairs of Kingdoms and Churches: *Admonendus est Philippus, ut desinat mundum regere.* But grace makes head a- 2 Sam. 15. 16. Deut. 3. 24. ver. 26.

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gainſt this corruption of nature: a regenerate man withſtands himſelf, in this point, as *Paul* did *Peter*, in his diſſimulation, *Gal.* 2. 11. Take him when he is himſelf, and he dares not ſtruggle with the will of God: *I was dumb and opened not my mouth becauſe thou dideſt it*, Pſal. 39. 9. And tho he could wiſh it might be otherwiſe with himſelf, or with the Church; yet he learns
Matth. 26. 39. of Chriſt to ſay, *Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* A Regenerat man would captivate his own reaſon to the will of God. Natural reaſon is no competent ſurveyor of the ways of God. Tho God doth nothing againſt right reaſon, yet he doth many things above the beſt reaſon we are maſters of: *My*
Iſa. 55. 8. *thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways, ſaith the Lord.* Grace teacheth to ſubmit, and not to diſpute with God. When God ſmote *Aarons* two eldeſt Sons, the firſt in the Prieſts orders, *Aaron held his peace*, Levit. 10. 3.

When *David* ſaid, Pſal. 46. 8. *Come, behold what deſolation God hath made in the earth*; what ſaith God? *Be ſtill, and know that I am God*, v. 10. It is the principle of regenerate men, and their practice alſo to their power, to have their minds conformable to Gods, and to reſolve themſelves into his will and Wiſdome. We find 2 *Sam.* 3. 36. that the people had ſuch a high opinion of *Davids* Wiſdom and goodneſs, that it's ſaid, *Whatſoever the King did, pleaſed the people.* So truly, Gods people know ſo much of his Wiſdome and faithfulneſs to them, that they can readily juſtify him in his ſtrangeſt works. *I know,*
Pſa. 119. 75. *in very faithfulneſs, thou haſt afflicted me.* Tho a child of God may ſeek a better condition, than that he ſometimes is in: yet he thinks not ill of God whilſt he is in it. *David* thought it ſad to be delivered up to the will of men; 2 Sam. 24. but not ſo to be delivered up to the will of God, *Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let us not fall into the hands of men*: eſpecially wicked men, for *their tender mercies are cruel*, Prov. 12. 10. *I was but a little diſpleaſed, and they helped forward the affliction*, Zech. 1. 15. When a man comes into a ſtate of grace, he knows this truth, of which he was ignorant before, That he loſeth nothing by yeelding to Gods will. Chriſt was no loſer, when he yielded to his Fathers will; for God *heard him as to what he feared.* Tho he was not delivered from death, yet he was delivered from the fear of death.

Death. So Saint *Paul* was not delivered from *the thorn in the flesh*; but he was from sinking under it: *my grace is sufficient for thee.* When *Job* Justified God, and Judged himself for speaking against the way God had taken for his Tryal; then God made him amends, and made his latter end better than his beginning. Heb. 5. 7. Cor. 2. 12. Job 40. 42.

USE. You then that are the Lords converts, let this gracious disposition abound in you more and more. The excellency of grace, lyeth in your subjection and submission to the good pleasure of God in trying Providences. Subjection even to God, goeth down hardly with the corrupt nature of man; as we see in our first Parents. Man would not be Lorded over: *who is Lord over us?* This Leven, was in *Corah* and his company: *ye take too much upon you.* And how did *Israel* chide with God himself about his trying Providences? Man is naturally a stout creature, and it is his hardest task to submit to God. But grace makes a man submissive and lowly; as Christ was. Grace abaseth a man in his own eyes. Parts and priviledges pamper mans pride: *Paul* was prone to this by his Revelations. And *Hezekiah* by his miraculous deliverance. Knowledg puffeth up, that knowledg which is only a common gift: But grace doth the contrary: Christ who was full of grace, tho God, yet submitted himself to man; much more to God. Submit your selves to God; this is the way to be familiar with him: *To this man will I look, that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word.* When the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks of hard tryals, he bids Christians to be in *subjection to the father of spirits.* So was *Eli*; *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* And so was *David*; *It may be the Lord had him curse David.* And so was *Hezekiah*, when God threatned him, *good is the word of the Lord.* Man in his conversion delivers up himself to God not onely to do, but to suffer his will: he comes to God as a lost undone creature, and layeth himself at the Feet of God: he putteth his mouth in the dust, as if he were afraid to speak one murmuring word of the hardest Providences of God towards him. This to the World may seem to be base; but it is a noble spirit, and hath a noble reward with God. It is the same spirit that was in Christ; and for this, *God highly exalted him, and gave* Psal. 12. 4. Num. 16. 3. Num. 14. 27. Matth. 11 29. 2 Cor. 12. 8. Chr. 2. 3. 2. 1 Cor. 8 1. Luke 2 15. Jam. 4 7. Isa 66. 2. Heb. 12. 1. Sam. 3. 18. 2 Sam. 16 10. 2 Kings 20. 19. Lam. 3 29. Phil. 2. 8. v. 9.

gave him a name above every name. Look upon Christ, till you be changed into the same Image. He was *equal with God*; God calls him *his fellow*: and yet he was willing to go back ten Degrees, as the Sun did. He that was in the form of God, took upon him *the form of a servant*, the lowest of men, and *became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.*

Phil. 2. 6.
Zach. 13. 7.
Isa. 38. 8.
Phil. 2. 8.

The *Arrians*, and *Socinians* upon this place, cavil much against the Divinity of Christ. But as *Calvin* said, All the Devils can never wrest this place so far as to take Christs Godhead from him. For who can think it no robbery to be equal with God, that is not God, and of the same essence with God? Yet Christ submitted to his Fathers will: *what shall I say? father, save me from this hour; nay glorify thine own name.* We shall never be put to such subjection and submission to the will of God, as Christ was; to go so many degrees back, as he did. And therefore we may well be contented to be, what God will have us be, and to be with out what God will have us to be without. Grumble not that you must not eat of the forbiden Fruit. Beleeve it, that there is more reason in the will of God, than in our lusts. We must expect commands of tryal, and trying providences: and therefore take heed of the spirit of the first *Adam*; and covet earnestly the Spirit of the second, to let God have his pleasure on us. Christ had done *no violence, neither was there deceit in his mouth: yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief.* Christs servants have one and the same spirit with Christ, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* They have the same spirit with Christ, tho not in the same measure: for *he hath not the spirit by measure.* But yet they have such a measure of the spirit, as to enable them to be in subjection to the pleasure of God: *He shall teach you all things.* And so much for the third particular, to which a convert is restored, viz. Subjection to God.

John 12. 27.
Isa. 53. 8, 10.
1 Cor. 6. 17.
Rom. 8. 9.
John 3. 34.
John 14. 26.

I come now to the 4th and last particular, and that is, Dominion over the Creature. This was *Adams* Privilege in the day of his Creation: *Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the Sea, and over the fowle of the air, and over the cattel, and over all the earth.* And it was repeated afterwards. Now man recovers this Privilege of Dominion, in his Conversion: *All things are yours:* and *you are*

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joynt heirs with Christ; tho not joynt Purchasers, yet joynt Heirs. *Adams* dominion over the Creation, in his state of Innocency, was like the *Centurions*: *I say to this man go, and he goeth*; *and to another, come, and he cometh*; *and to my servant, do this, and he doth it.* Man had all creatures in the Air, the Waters, and the Earth, at his beck. The relicts of this dominion is in man still; the Creatures stand in awe of him: *All are tamed by man.* But it was mightily impaired by the fall: *Eve* was not afraid of the Serpent, as *Moses* was when he fled from it. Yet doubtless, when a man is restored to the Image of God in holiness, God makes the creature more subject to him, as there is occasion, than to a natural man. He hath more dominion over the Creature, tho it be a more spiritual and mystical dominion than *Adams* was. Dogs that eat the flesh of *Jezabel*, licked the sores of *Lazarus*. The Sea that divided it self for *Moses* and *Israel*, covered *Pharaoh* and his Host. The fire that did not singe the cloaths of those three Servants of God, consumed the men that cast them into the fiery Furnace. The Lyons that brake the bones of those that accused *Daniel*, opened not their mouths against *Daniel*. The Ravens that pickt out the eyes of rebellious Children, feed *Elijah*. Serpents stung the unbelieving *Israelites*; yet the Viper that fastened on *Pauls* hand did him no hurt. It's true, the man of God was slain by a Lion, but it was because he had been disobedient to the command of God. It is observable what the Lord said to *Noah* that good man: *The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon every thing that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea*; *into your hand are they delivered*: the same priviledge that *Adam* had in innocency. Yea, the Servants of God have had more command of the creatures then *Adam* then had: they have had command over Cœlestial bodies, as well as Terrestrial. *Joshua* commanded the Sun and Moon to *stand still*: *Elijah* both *shut* and *opened Heaven*: and commanded *fire from Heaven*: and at *Hezekiahs* motion, *The Sun went back ten degrees.*

Matth. 8 9. Jam. 3 7. Exod. 4 3. 2 Kings 9. 36. Luke 15. 21. Exod. 14 38. Dan 5. Dan. 6. Pro. 30. 19. 1 Kings 17. Numb. 21. Acts 28. 1 Kings. 13. Gen. 9. 2. Joshua 10. 12. James 5. 1. 2 Kings 1. Isa. 38.

But now the dominion that Christ hath purchased for his people, is a Spiritual and Mystical dominion.

And *First*, in a ſtate of grace a man hath power and dominion over Devils, which *Adam* had not in his grant. The Devil ſubdued him by his firſt temptation. When the ſeventy Diſciples returned, it was with joy, ſaying, *Lord, even the Devils are ſubject to us through thy name.* This was indeed as to *bodily poſſeſſion.* But there is a power and dominion that every godly man hath over the Devil: *Ye have overcome the wicked one.* He that is begotten of God, *keepeth himſelf, that the wicked one toucheth him not:* He cannot hurt and harm him: *Touch not mine anointed.* We read of Chriſts touching, and that was a healing touch: and we read of the Devils touching, in *Jobs* caſe, and that was a hurtful touch: ſo it was at preſent; but in the iſſue, God made it healing, and to do *Job* good; as the skilful Apothecary makes a wholeſom Treacle with the fleſh of Vipers. The faith of a child of God will *quench the fiery darts of the Devil*; and his reſiſtance puts the Devil to flight.

Gen. 3. Luke 10. 17. 2 John 2. 14. 1 John 5. 18. Pſa. 105. 15. Matth. 8. 3. Eph. 6. 16. James 4. 5.

The Life of grace lyeth much in conflicts with the Devil, and our own luſts: Satan *winnowed the Diſciples*: and *ſtood at Joſhua's right hand*; and ſent his *meſſenger to buffet Paul*: But ſtill he was worſted. The Devil is forced, at laſt, to leave a Saint, as he did Jeſus Chriſt. He adventured on Chriſt himſelf, but to no purpoſe, it was to his own prejudice. And Chriſt hath endued his people with power over the prince of this World: *They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.* Sinners in their converſion are *turned from the power of Satan unto God*: henceforth, *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt them.* And the Apoſtle *John* gives the reaſon of this; *Becauſe he that is in you, is greater than he that is in the World.*

Luke 22. Zech. 3. 1. 2 Cor. 12. 8. Matth. 2. John 14. 30. Rev. 12. 11. Acts 26. 18. 1 John 3. 4.

When once a man returns to God, a ſtronger than Satan takes poſſeſſion of him, and keeps gariſon in him: *We are kept by the power of God.* So that in this reſpect, the Saints have power over the Devil himſelf.

2 Pet. 1. 5. Rev. 1. 6.

Secondly, Men in a ſtate of grace have dominion over ſin. Grace hath ſuch a dominion over ſin, as altho it doth not drive ſin out at once (no more than *Iſrael* could the *Canaanites*) yet it doth by degrees, as *Joſhua* did them. There is more power in grace, than in ſin: *The ſpirit that dwelleth in you, luſteth to envy, but he giveth more grace.*

Jam. 4. 6.

Sin

Sin that dwelleth in the regenerate, may ſometimes get the advantage of grace; as a weaker man may do of a ſtronger: but ſin can never get the victory, ſo as to extirpate the habits of grace, as it did in *Adam*; one ſin in him, deſtroyed all grace: as a *dead fly will corrupt a whole pot of precious oyntment*. Eccleſ 10. 1. But Sin cannot now deſtroy Grace. *He that is born of God ſinneth not, becauſe his ſeed remaineth in him.* 1 John 3. 9. When the Saints ſeem to be ſubdued, yet they are *more than conquerors*. Rom. 8. 37. *Sin ſhall not have dominion over you.* Rom. 6. 14. *He will ſubdue our iniquities. I have kept my ſelf, ſaith David, from mine iniquity.* Mich 7. 19. 2 Sam. 22.

Sin may play the Tyrant in a good Man. *Paul* found it did ſo in him; but he will never own it for his Liege Lord. Rom. 7. 23. He may be ſometimes a captive to Sin or Satan, but will never be a ſubject; he never ſerves ſin freely and heartily, as natural men do. *Paul* was *ſold under ſin*; but *Ahab ſold himſelf to work wickedneſs*. Rom. 7. 14. 1 Kings 21. This is certain, that whatſoever preſent foils good men may have, this will be their triumph at laſt: *The ſtrength of ſin is the law: but thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Cor. 15. 57

USE. This ſerves to exhort you, who are reſtored to this dominion, to put it into exerciſe; bear not this Sword in vain: if you have dominion over the Devil, then *give not place to the Devil*, as *Eve* did, when ſhe did eat of the forbidden Fruit; and as *David* did, when the Devil provoked him to number the People: and as *Peter* did, when he diſſwaded Chriſt from his Sufferings. Eph. 4. 37. Gen. 3. 6. 2 Chron 21. 1. But reſiſt him. He not onely had a hand in the firſt ſin, but hath in all ſins. And therefore the luſts that men do, are called the Devils luſts. In every Temptation, ſay as Chriſt did, *get thee behind me, Satan.* John 8. Matth. 16. 23. Reſiſt, and he will fly. Every denial is a diſcouragement to him. And tho he will on to a ſecond temptation, when the firſt fails; and to a third; as when he aſſailed Chriſt himſelf: and altho he be gone at preſent, may be but for a ſeaſon, to return with ſtronger aſſaults; yet you will be ſure to worſt him in the iſſue: *The God of peace ſhall bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly.* Luke 4. 13. Rom. 16. 20. The Apoſtle hath reference to the firſt Goſpel Promiſe, *The ſeed of the woman ſhall break the ſerpents head.* Gen. 3.

You see you have power; therefore use it. The Sword of the Spirit is a weapon which the Devil cannot secure himself against.

And use the power you have given you, against indwelling sin. You may keep your selves from your iniquity, as well as *David* did. Oh spare not *Agag*. Grace inherent, with assisting Grace, will enable you to overcome. There must be assisting grace to take away boasting: *yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* And know that assisting grace is as certainly yours, if you look for it, as inherent. *My grace is sufficient for thee.* This concerns us, as well as *Paul.* Do not therefore be faint-hearted in bidding battel to any lust. Say not as *David* did of *Saul, I shall one day perish* by this or that corruption. You wrong Christ, and you wrong his grace in you, and with you, if you do. Art thou put at any time to cry out, as the Damsel when forced, or as *Paul* did, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* Be as ready to say as he, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* That is, for grace by him, which hath power over sin, and is contrary to all dispositions to it.

Psal. 18. 23.

1 Cor. 15. 19.
2 Cor. 12. 20.

2 Sam. 27.

Rom 7. 24.

A Christian is never overcome by any lust, but it is because he doth not improve the grace of Christ; not only grace received, but grace that would join with it, if sought for.

Thirdly, if you have dominion over the Creature, then let not the creature have dominion over your hearts. Be not slaves to those things, that you are made Lords over; tho not to command them into your hands, yet to command them out of your hearts, which must *be for God, and not for another.*

Hos 3. 3.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Maketh the general Application from the whole precedent Doctrine.

I Shall now make Application of the whole. And first, this Doctrine of a Sinners return to God, may put every man upon enquiry whether he hath made this Return? which may be known by these following signs.

First, A sinner in his conversion to God makes much enquiry what he shall do for his poor Soul, and how he should be saved; and what he shall do for God, as well as himself. When those *Jews* were pricked in their hearts, they forthwith cry out to *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Before they would do nothing but what they lifted; but now, any thing that God would have them, they would do. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* saith *Paul*, at his conversion. *Judas* and *Cain* were terrified, and *Felix* trembled, as well as those *Jews*. But they came not to this question, *what shall we do?* They came not to the poor trembling Gaolors question, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* nor to Pauls, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* The terrors of wicked men are a Bridle to keep them from God: but the terrors of repenting sinners, are Spurs to drive them to him. Observe these three things in those poor Souls that were pricked at their heart.

Acts 2. 37.

Acts. 9. 6.

Acts 16. 30.

First, They were taken off of self: alas, they knew not what in the world to do, they were beaten off of all shifting and shirking tricks and evasions, which sinners but too often use.

Secondly, They sat not down in sullen and slothful despair, as *Judas* did; but were sollicitous what course to take: Oh, tell us what is to be done: *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* And *Paul* did not dissemble, as the *Israelites* did; but he spake from his very Soul. Therefore when Christ bid him arise

Deut. 5. 27.

ariſe, and go into the City, and it ſhould be told him what
Acts 9. 7, 8. he ſhould do; he did ſo; tho blind, he will be led.

Thirdly, They ſoon changed their thoughts of the Apoſtles:
Acts 2. 37. *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?* They hated and abhorred them before; but now ſay they, *men and brethren.* And ſo the Gaoler of *Paul* and *Silas*: before his converſion, he uſed them as vagabonds, he whipped them, and ſet them in the Stocks. But when that work was wrought, then he ſaith,
Acts 16. *Sirs*, my Lords, *what muſt I do to be ſaved?* And ſo *Paul* once thought Jeſus an Impoſtor, and a falſe Prophet; but at his converſion, he ſaith, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?*

2*ly*, A Sinners Converſion brings in with it the Spirit of Prayer. This was the diſcovery the Lord himſelf gave of
Acts 9. 11. *Saul* his being a convert, *Behold he prays.* The Spirit of
Zech. 12. 10. Grace, and the Spirit of Supplication, are poured out upon Sinners both together. This is of the firſt fruits of Converſion; man in his natural Birth is born ſpeechleſs: but he that is born of God, ſpeaks as ſoon as he is born. And there may be much of the Spirit of Prayer, where there appears little
Matth. 26. 36. of the gift, as when Chriſt made but ſhort Prayers, and the
Heb. 5. 7. ſame Petitions over and over. And ſo *Moſes* never prayed more powerfully, than when he made thoſe ſhort Prayers, *Exod.* 14. The Spirit helpeth us to pray *with groans that*
Rom. 8 26. *cannot be uttered.* As God ſaith of his houſe, *My houſe ſhall*
Iſa. 56. 7. *be called an houſe of prayer*: So a ſtate of Grace, is a ſtate of Prayer. Even Promiſes themſelves, muſt be prayed into per-
Ez. 36. 37. formance. Every thing in a godly mans life is ſanctified by
1 Tim. 4. 5. Prayer: and therefore much of his time is taken up with it. Chriſt was much herein; eſpecially in ſecret Prayer; we read
Luc. 6. 12. of whole Nights which he ſpent in ſecret Prayer. Prayer is an Ordinance that keeps up Communion with God.

If friends be not often together, there grows ſtrangeneſs. Praiſe is the great work of Saints in Heaven; and Prayer is the great work of Saints on Earth; eſpecially ſecret Prayer.
Matth. 6. 6. The hypocritical Phariſees in our Saviours time, prayed much openly, and made long Prayers, but without the Spirit of Prayer. But where Grace governs the heart, there will be much ſecret Prayer, the Spirit of Prayer begins to work in
Jer. 32. 18. Converſion.

3*ly*, The

3*ly*, The greateſt and kindlieſt part of Repentance for ſin, follows the Converſion of a Sinner. *Surely after I was turned, I repented.* That Woman we read of, *Luke* 7. had abundance of tears which followed the change of her heart. There is no ſuch ſelf-loathing and bewailing ſin, as after evidence of pardon. There is a Spring of godly ſorrow in every pardoned Sinner. Jer. 32. 19. Ezek. 16. 36.

4*ly*, If thou art converted, thou wilt be much admiring the Grace of God, as *Paul* was, *I was a blaſphemer, a perſecutor, and injurious; yet I obtained mercy.* It is harder to make a Sinner a Saint, than to make another World, God meets with ſo much oppoſition in the work. And therefore it is a work that cannot but be admired. And beſides, there may be many circumſtances in thy Converſion, that may make thee wonder at it; That thy time ſhould be the time of love, thy ſinful time. *When thou waſt in thy blood, I ſaid unto thee, live; yea, I ſaid unto thee, when thou waſt in thy blood, live. We are by nature children of wrath as well as others: but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickned us together with Chriſt. By grace ye are ſaved.* And it may be, God hath left many in their natural ſtate, who were, and are of a more unblameable Life than thou waſt before thy Converſion: It may be God hath paſſed by many, of whom it may be ſaid, as Chriſt ſaid to that man, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of Heaven,* and hath ſeized upon thy heart, which was wicked and prophane. How can a man come into a new World, and a more excellent World, and not wonder? Such is the new Creature, in which *all things become new.* It is thus, even where Converſion is wrought with the leaſt Obſervation, and with the ſtilleſt voice. Converſion makes as great a difference in a mans ſtate, as Diſſolution or Death; there is as great a difference between a ſtate of Nature and Grace, as between Grace and Glory, if not a greater. Thoſe are oppoſite or contrary; Theſe but ſubordinate, and have only a gradual difference. Ezek. 16. 6. Eph. 2. 3, 4, 5. Mark 12. 34. 2 Cor. 5. 17.

Secondly, This Doctrine is uſeful to Exhortation. When you have laid your condition to theſe marks, and can find none of them, or no footſteps of them, neither at preſent, nor

nor upon ſolemn ſearch; then bewail and lament your ſelves,
Judges 11.40. more than the Daughters of *Iſrael* did the Daughter of *Jephthah*. Do it ſo, as *Ephraim* did, when the Lord heard him,
Jer. 31. 18. and was deeply affected therewith. *I have ſurely heard Ephraim bemoaning himſelf.* Like that in Acts 7. 34. *I have ſeen, I have ſeen the affliction of my people:* So is God affected with a Sinners bemoaning himſelf in his ſinful ſtate. Conſider, as a forcible and encouraging motive to look after your Converſion, who they be that deſire it, and who they be that are againſt it.

1ſt. God earneſtly deſires it: *Say unto them*, to whom? To thoſe that ſaid, *they ſhould pine away in their ſins*; and what ſhould the Prophet ſay to them? *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death, or damnation of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye*
Ezek. 33 11. *from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?*
Job 33. 27. Obſerve that in *Job*, *He looketh upon men*, (obſerveth how they are affected with their ſins and ſinful ſtate) *and if any ſay, I*
Luc. 18. 13. *have ſinned*; (as ſenſibly as that poor *Publican* did) *He will deliver his ſoul from going down to the pit* (into Hell) *and his life ſhall ſee the light*; *lo, theſe things worketh God oftentimes*
Matth. 23. 37. *with man.* And Jeſus Chriſt is as deſirous and longing after thy Converſion, and is grieved when men refuſe him. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldeſt not?* Tho ſuch great Sinners, yet Chriſt would have had them come in to him. And in Luke 19. 41. It's ſaid, That *he wept over Jeruſalem, and ſaid, If thou hadſt known* (or, oh that thou hadſt known) *even thou at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.* It is the will of Sinners that undoeth them. This was
Matth. 4. 24. the firſt, and the laſt Doctrine of Chriſt, *Repent.* And the
Luc. 24. 47. Spirit ſtrives with the vileſt of Sinners. *My ſpirit ſhall not*
Gen. 6. 3. *always ſtrive with man*; but yet he would ſtrive a hundred and twenty years. The Spirit in the Miniſtry of the Goſpel preach-
John 16. 8. eth to Sinners: *The ſpirit convinceth of ſin.* The Spirit awakens ſleepy Conſciences, and doth many things towards a Sinners Converſion. And the unconverted are charged with
Acts 7. 51. *reſiſting the Holy Ghoſt.*

And

And the Holy Angels will be glad of thy Converſion: It is matter of joy to them, when you repent: *There is joy in the preſence of the Angels of God, over one ſinner that repenteth.* Luke 15. 10. How did they rejoyce, and congratulate the coming of Chriſt in our Nature, to be the Sinners Surety and Saviour? Luke 2. 14.

Thou doſt not know how many deſtroying ſins the Angels have ſtopt thee from; as the Angel did *Balaam*, in his attempts to curſe *Iſrael*. As *Michael* the Archangel contended with the Devil about the Body of *Moſes*; ſo doubtleſs, do the Angels of God with evil Angels, about Sinners in their return to God. Numb. 22. Jude 9.

And Saints both in Heaven, and on Earth, are for thy Converſion: *There is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth*: This takes in God, and Angels, and Saints there. And Saints here make it much of their buſineſs to convert ſinners, they would be glad of their company to Heaven. This we ſee in *David*; *Then will I teach tranſgreſſors thy ways, and ſinners ſhall be converted unto thee.* Luke 15. 7. Pſal. 51. 13.

Conſider alſo who are againſt thy converſion: none but Devils, and their inſtruments. The Devil *blinds the minds of men, leſt the light of the knowledge of the glory of God ſhould ſhine into their hearts.* The Devil hindered *Paul* from doing good amongſt the *Theſſalonians*. He that drew the firſt man, would draw all men into his own condemnation. And his Inſtruments are alſo like-minded. How did the *Phariſees* murmur that Chriſt converſed with ſinners, and converted ſinners? How angry and mad were the *Jews*, that the Goſpel was Preached to the Gentiles? 2 Cor 4. 4. 2 Tim. 2. 26. 2 Theſ. 2 18. 1 Tim. 3. Acts 13. 50.

Queſt. But what can a ſinner do towards his converſion?

Anſ. More than he will do: it is true the *power* is Gods; but the *act* is Thine. It is not weakneſs, but wilfulneſs that hinders the converſion of ſinners: *They will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord.* It is not becauſe they cannot, but becauſe they will not; *they refuſe to return.* Hoſ. 4. 4. Jer. 8. 5.

Queſt. But what ſhall I do?

Anſ. When you are come to that in good earneſt, as they were, Acts 2. 37. And the Gaoler, Acts 16. 30. And *Saul*, Acts 9. 6. You will not want inſtruction in the caſe. The ſpirit that ſent *Philip* to joyn himſelf to the *Eunuch* to teach him, will do as much for thee when thou art ſenſible of thy loſt condition, and enquireſt after a remedy. Oh lye at the Pool ſide, lye under the miniſtry of the Goſpel, which Preacheth repentance, and is a ſpecial means to give repentance, and is *the word of reconciliation*. Oh lye in the way where Jeſus comes, as the blind men did, and ſo they were healed.

Acts 8. 29.

2 Cor. 5. 19.

Matth. 20.

And pray to God to turn thee; *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned.* And doubt not whether thy Prayers ſhall be heard. Prayer was that which *Peter* put ſo great a ſinner as *Simon-magus* upon; *pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee.* Oh be not diſcouraged becauſe thy converſion depends on Gods Power, and not thine own; let not this hinder thy endeavours, in the uſe of inſtituted means, but rather provoke them. As *Paul* ſaid of the Doctrine of Faith, *Do we then make void the law by faith? God forbid; yea, we eſtabliſh the law.* So altho thy converſion is onely in the power of God; yet this makes not void thy endeavours in the uſe of means, but rather may quicken thee to it. It is better that the Power is in God, than in thy ſelf; for if it were in thy ſelf, ſo long as thou haſt ſo baſe a will, thou wouldeſt miſcarry. Oh let ſinners attend upon the means of Converſion. Endure the terrors of the Law in your conſcience, by preſentiating all your ſins to you, and damnation for them. Better the Law kill you, whilſt there is a Goſpel to cure you, than to ſtay till the Goſpel caſt you off as well as the Law. The Goſpel damns ſinners refuſing mercy and grace, more deeply than the Law. *He that believeth not, ſhall be damned. Now*, ſaith Chriſt to *Jeruſalem, the things that belong to thy peace, are hid from thine eyes.*

Jer. 31. 18.

Acts 8. 22.

Rom. 3. 31.

Mar. 16. 16.

Luke 19. 41.

Deut. 29. 19.

As full of metal as many ſinners are now, even to *bleſs themſelves in their ſinful ſtate*; they will be tamed, either by Converſion, or Confuſion. Oh let not the thoughts of the power of a ſinners converſion being alone in God, take you off of the means of converſion, and ſo make you ſit to ſee if it will drop into your mouths.

When

When all the Corn in *Egypt*, was in *Josephs* Power, should a poor *Egyptian* say, I have no Corn, *Joseph* hath all in his keeping, therefore I will sit still and Starve? No; but, therefore I will go where it is to be had. And make you this Application. The Power of a Sinners Conversion is in God: What then? Shall I sit still and perish? No; but therefore I will go to God for it: *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.* Gen. 41. Jer. 31. 18.

Obj. But still my Conversion depends on the Will of God, as well as his power: *If peradventure, God will give them repentance.* 2 Tim. 2. 25.

Answ. Consider that the Angels that sinned, have no encouragement; there is no possibility of their conversion, they are reserved in chains of everlasting darkness, to the Judgment of the great day. Those Lepers used the means to save their lives, upon a *peradventure*; and the *Ninivites* fasted and prayed, and repented, as well as they could, upon *a may be: Who knows if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?* And the *Jews* were exhorted to do so, upon *a who knows.* And the meek of the Earth are advised *to seek righteousness*, and *seek meekness* upon an *It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lords anger.* Jude 6. 2 Kings 7. Jonah 3. 9. Joel 2. 12, 13, 14. Zeph 2. 3.

And consider, that thy Conversion is more likely, than of thousands and ten thousands that have not the means of Conversion. When the Lord sent *Paul* to preach at *Corinth*, he encouraged him with this, *I have much people in this city.* And there are thousands of instances where conversion hath followed, when the means of Conversion have been waited on. The greatest danger is in indulging the impediments; your Ignorance, and Self-flattery, and false Refuges. It was the Prodigals case a great while. Men are too well content to stay in their natural Condition; as *Reuben* and *Gad* were to stay on this side *Jordan.* The great sin of natural men is, that they hinder their own thorow Conviction; *They love darkness rather than light.* They *resist the spirit.* They cannot bear the searching of their sores; they cannot away with the sight and sense of sin and wrath in their Consciences. But remember, Act. 18. 10. Numb. 32. John 3. 19. Act. 7. 51.

There can be no ſore ſearched without pain; and that this painful ſearching the Sore, is in order to being healed.

So much for this great point of a Sinners converſion, or return to God. *And he aroſe, and came to his father.*

CHAP. XIX.

After Explication of the next Part of the Parable, ſheweth, That God takes ſpecial notice of a Sinners firſt beginning to return towards him. From the next Clauſe of the 20. Verſe.

And when he was yet a great way off, his father ſaw him.

WE have done with the younger Sons part: We are now to enter upon the Fathers part, acted and managed in this famous Parable. A Parable which of all Parables our Lord Jeſus ſpake, and the Holy Ghoſt hath commended to us in writing; is the moſt eminent, fulleſt of affection, and painted with the moſt pleaſing colours.

Now in the tranſaction of the Fathers part, we have in general, The Prodigals gracious and affectionate entertainment.

Firſt, By his Father alone, verſe 20. *But when he was yet a great way off, his father ſaw him, and had compaſſion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kiſſed him.*

Secondly, By the Family at his Fathers command, in ver. 22, 23. *The father ſaid unto his ſervants, Bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and ſhooes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.* With the reaſon of this his ſolemn entertainment, in ver. 24. *For this my ſon was dead, and is alive again; he was loſt, and is found.*

Firſt,

First, For his entertainment by his Father alone. *But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran*, that is, to meet him. What an indulgent Father is this? Oh how indulgent is God to returning Sinners, altho they have been very rebellious? It is spoken prophetically of Christ, *That when he ascended on high* (to God the Father) *he received gifts, even for the rebellious. When he was yet a great way off*: As it is said, *Christ came and preached peace to them that were afar off.* Psal. 68. 18. Eph. 2. 17.

Quest. But how doth this agree with the former words? *And he arose, and came to his father.*

Ans. He was in a far countrey, when he first arose to come to his Father, as we saw before. And therefore it is said, *When he was yet a great way off.* Before he was come home, his Father saw him. The *Greek* word signifies, a seeing with attention, and with affection; his Eye affected his Heart, as *Jeremiah*'s did. He saw him, as Jesus saw *Nathaniel* under the Figtree. Christ saw *Nathaniel* within, to the heart, and with the heart. And that the Father thus saw his returing Son with an affecting sight, is plain by what follows: *He saw him, and had compassion.* His passion did not vent it self against him, as *Saul*'s did against *David*; but his compassion, as when the *Samaritan* saw the wounded Traveller; *when he saw him, he had compassion on him*, because he saw him wounded, and in his blood. So the Father saw his Son in a pitiful Garb without, and in a pitiful Case within; scarce any Cloathes on his back, or Shoes on his feet; his Cloathes were like *Joshua's* filthy rags. He saw him coming, weeping and sorrowing, as *Joseph* and *Mary* sought Jesus sorrowing. And as the returning *Jews* sought the Lord with weeping: *And I heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.* Thus did the Father see his Prodigal Son coming, weeping, and sorrowing, and bemoaning himself for his Rebellion against his Father. And therefore, when he saw him, he had compassion, his Bowels were troubled for him. And further 'tis said, the Father *ran*, that is, to meet him. The Son goes; *I will arise, and go to my Father*; but the Father runs. God is before-hand with a Sinner, even a returning Sinner; if he come one step, God comes ten to meet him. Lam. 3. 51. John 1. 48. 1 Sam. 19. Luke 10. Zech. 3. 1. Luke 2. 48. Jer. 31. 9. Jer. 31. 18.

Here

Here is eminently ſet forth to us Gods preventing grace: *Before they call, I will anſwer.* The ſinner hath it not in his heart and thoughts to return to God, till God put it therein. If God muſt keep good thoughts in the hearts of Saints, then much more muſt he put good thoughts towards God into the hearts of ſinners, if ever they have any. *I will take away the ſtone out of their fleſh, and I will give them an heart of fleſh.* And when he hath put good thoughts into a ſinners mind, he muſt help them into action, and execution: *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.* And when the ſinner begins to go towards God, God runs to meet him at his firſt ſetting out. The Father ran, a ſign of great affection; as we ſee in *Peters* and *Johns* running to Jeſus his Sepulchre.

Iſa. 65. 25.

2 Cor. 3. 5.

1 Chron. 19. 18.

Eze. 11. 19.

Phil. 2. 13.

John 20. 4.

Yet further, *He ran and fell on his neck*; as *Joſeph* did on his Brethrens that had ſold him into *Egypt*; he fell on their necks and wept, that is, for joy: and ſo did the Father of this prodigal. He fell not on his back with blows; but on his neck, with tears. His Father did not cry out of him, when he met him, and threaten, and revile him, as *Saul* did *Jonathan: Thou perverſe rebellious Son.* Nay, he did not ſay ſo much to him, as Jeſus his Mother ſaid to him, *Son, why haſt thou thus dealt with us?* But rather as it it is ſaid of *Davids* carriage to *Adonijah*; *His father ſaid not unto him at any time, why haſt thou done ſo?* No, the Father wept over him for joy, as *Joſeph* over *Benjamin.* His heart melted over him, as *Pharaoh's* Daughter did over the Babe: the Child wept, and ſhe wept; for it is ſaid, *ſhe had compaſſion on it.* So here, the Son weeps, and the Father weeps; the Father wept on the neck of his returned Son, after another ſort than *David* over *Abſolom*; but with as great affection; *O my ſon Abſolom, my ſon Abſolom! O Abſolom my ſon, my ſon!* So the Father here, O my Son! O my loſt Son! have I found thee again? *It is meet we ſhould make merry,* ſaith he to his Servants, *for this my ſon was dead, and is alive again, was loſt and is found.* He was even ſwallowed up with joy, that he found his loſt Son; as the Spouſe was, that ſhe had found her loſt beloved: *I have found him whom my ſoul loved.*

Gen. 45. 15.

1 Sam. 30.

Luke 2. 48.

1 Kings 1. 6.

Exod. 2. 5.

Cant. 3. 4.

Yet

Yet once more; it is added, *and kiſſed him.* And no queſtion, but this was an evident ſign of his reconciliation to his returning Son, as *Davids* kiſſing *Abſolom* was. And this was the great thing the poor returning prodigal loked for; It was the top of his deſire, his Fathers favour, tho he ſhou'd live with him in the meaneſt condition: *even as one of his hired ſervants. Benhadads* ſervants did not watch more for a word to fall from the King of *Iſraels* mouth, that might ſignify kindneſs to their maſter, than this poor prodigal did watch for ſome word, or ſome action from his Father, that might ſignify his reconciliation to him. Thus much for the opening of the words. I come now to the Doctrines. 2 Sam. 14.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father ſaw him. From whence obſerve.

Doct. That God obſerves, and is much affected with the very firſt ſtep which a ſinner takes towards him. The prodigal did but now riſe up to leave this far Countrey, and come to his Father: and his Father is taken with it. That paſſage in *Job* anſwers to this: *He looketh upon men,* that is with a ſet obſerving look; as *Eliſha* did on *Hazael: and if any ſay, I have ſinned*; If God once hear a man lamenting his ſins, not only as to himſelf, but as to God, as this returning ſinner did, God hath his wiſh, this pleaſeth him, this goes to his heart. Job 33. 27. 2 Kings 8. 11.

The beginnings of good in men are pleaſing to God: How was he affected with that *ſome good thing* in the Son of *Jeroboam towards the Lord God of Iſrael?* 1 Kings 14. 13. In the *Hebrew* it is, *ſome good thoughts.* There is joy in Heaven at a ſinners firſt converſion, at his beginning to act grace, and to live as a godly man; that his heart and his ways are faced about towards God. As the Angel ſaid to *Daniel*, *At the beginning of thy ſupplication, the commandment came forth.* To clear the point, conſider theſe three things. 1 Kings 14. 13. Dan. 9. 23.

1ſt. God loves the principle or firſt conception of grace in men, even before they come forth into any vigorous actings, as Jeſus Chriſt did the buds of grace in thoſe little children that he took up in his arms and bleſſed. God will bleſs the buddings of grace, according to that promiſe, *I will pour my bleſſing* Mar. 10. 16. Iſa. 44. 3.

bleſſing upon thy buds: ſo the *Geneva* tranſlation. We value the
Pſa. 126. 6. fileings of gold; and ſo doth God his ſeed in men. The
1 Pet. 1. 23. ſeed of God is precious and incorruptible ſeed: *His ſeed remain-*
1 John 3. 9. *eth in him*. Gods love is ſet upon men in their infancy of grace:
1 Cor. 15. 36. as he ſaid of *Iſrael, When Iſrael was a child, I loved him.* A
Hoſ. 11. 1. child is little, and knows little, and can do little: yet a Father
loves his child then: and ſo doth God his: *I write unto you,*
1 John 2. 12. *little children, becauſe your ſins are forgiven you for his name*
ſake.

Luc. 11. 1. The Diſciples of Chriſt, in the infancy of their grace, were
Matth. 9. 15. weak in prayer, and could not faſt, could not underſtand well
what Chriſt meant in many things; they were but raw Scholars
in the things of God: and yet Chriſt loved them, and was
John 15. 15. taken with them: *ye are my friends.* And he committed them
John 17. 13. to his Father when he was to leave them.

Yea, a child hath folly and frowardneſs, and the mother bears
it much: it abates not her love. And ſo have new converts;
poor ſinners in their return to God have folly and frowardneſs
in them, which God bears; as he did with *Ephraim*, Iſa. 57. 17.
Iſa. 57. 17. *He went on frowardly in the way of his heart; I have ſeen his*
ways, and I will heal him. Many new converts will not ſuffer
their wounds to be healed: But they muſt be more humbled
and broken, they are not fit for mercy, nor fit for Chriſt.
And many, they will not be comforted; as it is ſaid of *Ja-*
Gen. 37. 35. *cob.* Their Souls refuſe to be comforted, as the Pſalmiſt did.
Pſal. 77. 2. They are as peeviſh with God, as *Jonah* was; and yet ſtill
God bears it, and his affections are ſtill towards them: God
Jer. 15. 1. ſaid to *Jeremiah* of the apoſtatiſing *Jews*, *That his mind could*
not be towards them. But on the contrary, of theſe he ſaith, his
Hoſ. 11. 8. mind cannot be taken off of them; *How ſhall I give thee up,*
Hoſ. 11. 9. *Ephraim? I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim*; for all his fro-
wardneſs, for all I have ſo much ado with him. Where God
hath once beſtowed the leaſt meaſure of Grace, his heart can
never be utterly taken off from ſuch a Soul: *The gifts and*
Rom. 11. 29. *calling of God are without repentance.*

As is Gods diſpleaſure at the beginning of ſin, ſuch and more
is his content at the beginnings of grace. Now at the begin-
ning of ſin in man, God was wonderfully diſpleaſed; death
and condemnation entered into the world with ſin, yea death
and condemnation upon all, by the ſin of one. So the very
firſt

first act of Grace in man, pleaſeth God much. The beginnings of Grace, the loweſt meaſure of it, was the price of Blood, even *the blood of God.* Grace was Chriſts purchaſe, Act. 20 28. as well as Glory.

Again, The very beginnings of Grace are the product of an Infinite Power; greater power than that which created the World; becauſe it meets with great oppoſition. Grace is the product of ſuch Power as raiſed Chriſt from the dead; which was *exceeding great and mighty power.* One ſingle act Eph. 2. 19, 20. of Grace, hath more Glory in it, than all the ſplendid actions of all the unregenerate men in the World. The ſeed of Grace, 2 Cor 3 18. is Glory. As the Soul of one man, ſo one act of Grace, is Matth. 16. 26. more worth than all the World: yea, more Worlds than are in being. If a man ſhould die immediately upon his firſt acting of Grace, he would yet be meet to be partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in light. Col. 1. 12.

The repenting Malefactor upon the Croſs, was but a new convert before his Death, and but a few hours before; and he put forth but a few acts of Grace; and yet ſaith Jeſus to him, *This day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe.* God de- Luke 23. 43. lights in the firſt fruits of Grace, as they are an earneſt of the whole life following: A ſtate of Grace being ſuch a Spring, John 4. 14. as ſhall never be dryed up. Tho at the beginning it be but as 1 King. 18. 44. that little Cloud, like a mans hand; yet ſhall it encreaſe, till it drop down in fruitful Showers.

In a Sinners firſt Converſion, God ſeeth the draught of his own Image and Likeneſs, as a man ſeeth his own proportion in a Child new born; There is a perfection of Parts, tho not of Degrees. As to Degrees, Grace is not in its full perfection; there is not that perfect man St. *Paul* ſpeaks of, *Eph.* 4. 13. But yet there is the perfect Draught. God ſeeth his Divine nature in a new convert; his Seed, which tho at firſt it be but ſmall as a grain of Muſtard; yet it will grow up to a great tree. Matth 13 32. Grace in the leaſt of Saints, will be Glory.

Application. Firſt, This conduceth to the comfort and encouragement of thoſe that begin to ſet their face towards God: remember, God hath a gracious Eye on your firſt ſetting out toward him, whilſt you are but little, and can do little for God: *Little children, your ſins are forgiven.* You can pray but 1 John 2. 12.

 little;

little, it may be you have ten ſighs for one audible Expreſſion; yet God is taken with this, as Parents are with the broken Language of their Children. God values the offers at good, in his; as he did in *Abraham*, and in *David*, tho their purpoſes came not into act, becauſe God would not let them. *Now I know thou feareſt me, ſeeing thou haſt not withheld thine only ſon*, ſaith God to *Abraham*. And to *David*, *Thou didſt well, that it was in thine heart to build me an houſe*. Jeſus Chriſt prized the buds of Grace in his Diſciples, tho like the buds of Roſes, they had many Prickles about them, many Infirmities, Pride, Paſſion, Envy, Ignorance, Dulneſs, little Faith; all theſe diſcovered themſelves ſometimes, and yet Chriſt loved their buds of Grace. Yea, there may be much Grace in a ſmall action; as there was a great gift in the Widows two mites, and holy Love in a Cup of cold Water to a Diſciple. How did Chriſt honour the *Centurions* firſt act of Faith? And that of the Woman of *Canaan?* And the firſt acts of Repentance in *Mary Magdalen*, who had been ſuch a noted Sinner? Here therefore is encouragment for new Converts; God takes notice of their firſt ſetting out towards him, of their beginnings to walk with him.

Gen. 22. 12. 2 Chron. 6.

Luke 21. 3. Matth. 10 42 Matth. 8. 10. Matth. 15. 28. Luc 7.

2. USE, *Secondly*, Yet this conduceth alſo to caution, as well as comfort. God expects your little Grace ſhould come to much; that Grace ſhould riſe in you, as the Waters of the Sanctuary did. You muſt not always be Children in Grace, and in the exerciſe of Godlineſs. Tho Chriſt excuſed his Diſciples for a time, as to hard Duties, and hard myſterious Truths; yet he expected greater things from them, after his Aſcention, and his ſending of the Spirit. *Brethren*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *be not children in underſtanding, but be men*: in the *Greek* it is, *be ripe or perfect*: You ſhould ripen in the Knowledg of the things of God, and the Myſteries of Chriſt, and of the Spirit: Aim at *all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding*. *Timothy* knew the Scriptures from a Child. But ſome Chriſtians are always Children in this Knowledg.

Ezek 47.

Matth. 9. 16. John 16 12. Mar. 2. 20. John 16. 13. 1 Cor. 14. 22.

Col. 22. 2 Tim. 3. 15.

Neither ſhould you be always Children in your Affections and Paſſions towards the World, or towards one another. Remember what commendations the Apoſtle *Paul* gave many that he wrote to, and wrote of, *for their knowledg in the myſteries*

myſtries of Chriſt, and for *their faith*, and for *their obedience*, and for *their love to the Saints*. You ſhould all of you ſeek for theſe attainments. Rom. 1. 8. Rom. 16. 19. Col 1 4. 8.

The Apoſtle much blamed many of the *Corinthians* for being babes in Chriſt, ſo long; *I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal:* they diſcovered it by the broils, and diviſions, and contentions that were among them. 1 Cor. 3. 2, 3.

And ſo he blamed many of the believing *Hebrews*; they were *dull of hearing*; heavy hearted, as well as heavy headed. They were like narrow mouthed Veſſels, that could receive in but ſlowly. Thoſe were rebuking words of Jeſus to *Philip*, John 14. 9. *Have I been ſo long time with you, and yet haſt thou not known me, Philip?* So much for this Doctrine. Heb. 5. 12. Joh 14. 9.

CHAP. XX.

Wherein is ſhewed, the great pitty which God hath for repenting ſinners. From the next Clauſe of the 20. *Verſe*, And had compaſſion.—— *And that his mercy is beforehand with them. From the next following*, And ran.——

FRom the firſt of theſe obſerve,

Doct. That God much pitieth new couverts in their comming home to him. God treats not returning ſinners harſhly, as *Iſrael* did the *Gibionites* when they knew them to be ſuch; they *made them hewers of wood, and drawers of water*. No, the Father melted as much as the Prodgal did. The *Scribes* and *Phariſees* expected, that Jeſus Chriſt would have dealt roughly with the *Publicans* and ſinners that came to him, and followed him: that he would have called them wicked, damned creatures, and bid them ſtand a far off; as they in *Iſa.* 65. 5. Joſhua 9.

Come not near me, for I am holier than thou. That *Pharisee* that bad Christ to dinner, when he saw the carriage of *Mary Magdalene* to Jesus; Oh, saith he, *surely if this man were a Prophet,* Luc 7. *he would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner*: a noted, a notorious sinner. But Christ pitied the poor soul that now came to him for pardon, tho she had been so noted a sinner. Christ would fulfil what Luc 7. 39. was prophecied of him: *A bruised reed shall he not break, and* Isa. 42. 3. *smoking flax shall he not quench.* When a poor sinner returns, Matt. 12. 20. tho he hath been never so notorious a sinner; yet God doth not by him, as that man did by his fellow-servant; *Lay hold* Matt 18 28. *on him: and catch him by the throat:* God saith not, how canst thou have the face to come to me, that hast been so vile and base in thy ways? And so long? That hast run away with my goods and spent them upon Harlots? but all this is forgotten, and God hath nothing in his heart but pity: as here the Father towards his Son, tho he had been a most profuse and debauched wretch. How compassionately did *Joseph* carry it towards his brethren? tho they had been so unnatural to him, yet his bowels were moved towards them; especially when they knew him to be *Joseph*, and that he heard them bewail it, that they had dealt so basely and cruelly with him: it is said, Gen. 45. 42. *he turned himself about, and wept.* Thus doth God carry it towards self-bewailing sinners in their return to him; his thoughts towards them are not angry and wrathful, but full of pity and compassion. God is angry with sinners, whilst they stand Psa. 7 11. out and are sturdy, whilst they *set at nought his counsel, and* Pro. 25. 26. *will have none of his reproof*; he now *laughs at their calamity, and mocks when their fear cometh.*

But when a poor sinner is upon his return to God, and bewailing his long and sad distance from him, now Gods compassions are much raised.

Indeed God pitieth sinners before their conversion, when Eze. 16. 5. they *lye polluted in their blood, cast out into the open field, to* Exod. 2. 6. *the loathing of their persons, and no eye pities them.* Sinners do not pity one another; and Angels may not, till God distinguishes for them, who are Elect Vessels. Whilst men are out of Christ, Angels are their enemies: we see how the Cherubims with a drawn Sword, kept fallen man out of Paradise. Gen. 3 24. But God hath a pitiful eye upon sinners in their natural state:

When

When thou waſt polluted in thy blood, I ſaid unto thee, live: God hath ſuch compaſſion for the nature of man, that he pitieth man in his natural ſtate: he is *the Father of Mercies*, upon this account. It is through Chriſt that he is ſo, but it is for poor miſerable man that he is ſo. Ezek. 16. 6. 2 Cor. 1. 3.

God hath no mercy for ſinning Angels, but for ſinning man he hath. And why for ſinning man, and not for ſinning Angels? He gives the reaſon to *Moſes*, and it is repeated by *Paul*: Becauſe *he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy*. There are no ſinners amongſt men, but they have mercy offered to them; they have a call to repent, and to receive Chriſt, and ſalvation by him; and are aſſured, *that whoſoever believes in him, ſhall not periſh, but have eternal life. Go, preach the Goſpel to every creature.* But not a ſinning Angel hath a call to repent, or an offer of mercy by Jeſus Chriſt. Exod. 33. 19. Rom. 9. 18. John 16. 16. Mark 16. 15.

It is ſaid, that *Davids ſoul went out after Abſolom*, even when he had ſinned greatly. And ſo doth the Soul of God go out after the poor ſinner, when he lieth in his blood: *Go and tell them, As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked; but rather, that the wicked turn from his wicked ways, and live: Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* And if God pitieth ſinners before, then how much in their converſion. As the returning ſpring, after winter, ſtirs up the humours in the body: ſo doth the returning of a ſinner to God, after his long diſtance from him ſtir up the bowels of his compaſſion. God cannot refrain *the ſounding of his bowels*, when he hears young converts bemoaning themſelves as to their former ſinful ſtate. When the Lord heard *Ephraim* bemoaning himſelf, this went to his heart, *O my bowels are troubled for him.* God pities returning ſinners in the pangs of the new birth. Ordinarily, a convert hath his ſhare in the Spirit of Bondage; he is not without temptations to deſpair; the Spirit of Bondage precedes the Spirit of Adoption: *Ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear, but the ſpirit of Adoption.* Every returning ſinner paſſeth by Mount *Sinai*, to Mount *Tabor*. No *Iſraelite* looked up to the brazen Serpent, that had not been ſtung with the fiery Serpents. A ſinner knows the terrors of the Lord, before he knows his conſolations in Chriſt. 2 Sam. 13. 39. Ezek. 33. 11. Jer. 31. 18. Rom. 8. 15. Numb. 21. 9.

Moſes

Heb. 12. 21. *Moſes* himſelf ſaith, *I exceedingly fear and quake.* And
Acts 16. 30. *Paul* had the Spirit of Bondage in his converſion, as well as
Acts 2. 37. the Goaler. And ſo had thoſe *Jews* that were pricked at
2 Cor. 5 11. their heart. *We knowing the terrors of the Lord,* ſaith *Paul:* not by reading, or hearing onely, but by feeling.

There is indeed a different meaſure of this ſpirit of Bondage in repenting ſinners, yet all have it in ſome meaſure; all ſee their loſt condition in themſelves; all have fears of God and of their Eternal condition. As our Saviour ſaid of thoſe hearts that are good ground, tho they are differently fruitful, yet in
Matth. 13. all there is ſome fruit. And if any will take the boldneſs to ask the reaſon of this difference, as *Peter* did about his own caſe, and
John 21. 21, 22. *Johns*; his anſwer muſt be that given to *Peter*, *What is that to thee?* I ſay, there are pangs in the new birth; every convert hath the Spirit of Bondage; paſſeth out of *Egypt* into *Canaan*, through the wilderneſs: from a natural ſtate, to a ſtate of grace, through many ſoul ſtraits and difficulties: therefore God doth pity ſinners in their return to him. There is ſtriving betwixt God and the Devil, about ſinners in their converſion, as there was betwixt the Arch-Angel and the Devil, about *Moſes* his body, and Satan is ſure to loſe his poſſeſſion: and when
Jude 9. he doth, he tears the poor ſoul as he comes out, as he did the body of that man *Mark.* 1. 26. There is violence in a ſinners converſion: *The kingdom of heaven ſuffers violence, and the*
Matth. 11. 12. *violent take it by force:* God reſcueth the ſinner by force from
Coloſ. 1. 13. the power of Satan.

There are ſtrong motions in God towards a returning ſinner, as well as there are in the ſinner towards God. God is affected to ſee the tuggings that are betwixt fleſh and ſpirit, at the firſt coming of the ſpirit into a man.

Application. *Firſt*, This point ſpeaks comfort and encouragement to poor returning Sinners. You groan and bewail
Iſa. 63. 9. your ſelves, and God pitieth you; *He is afflicted in your afflictions*, of this kind, above all. Your ſighs for Sin go to his heart; your tugging with Satan, your conflicts with your own Corruptions, affect him much. If his Soul was
Judges 10. 16. grieved for the outward miſeries of *Iſrael*, then much more for the troubles of your hearts. God knows that your Spirits

are

are tender: A bruiſed or *a wounded ſpirit, who can bear?* Prov. 18. 14. Are you ſtill in the pangs of the new Birth? And is not the Spirit of Bondage yet quite caſt out? Yet believe, that God is touched with your troubles: He cannot have a hard heart towards you, that hath wrought a tender heart in you. Returning Sinners cannot ſay to God, as that Servant did to his Lord, *I knew that thou waſt a hard man.* Thou canſt not ſay, I knew thou waſt a hard God, and hadſt no compaſſion for me under the wounds of my Conſcience, and the bruiſes of Spirit for Sin. No, my Brethren, God hath taken an order with one, to bind up your broken heart, and to heal your bruiſed Spirit: *The ſpirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the Goſpel to the poor:* Glad tydings to the poor in Spirit, to ſelf-judging, and ſelf-deſpiſing Souls. *He hath ſent me to heal the broken hearted,* that is, *for ſin; to preach deliverance to the Captives*; ſuch as that Daughter of *Abraham* was, *whom Satan had bound eighteen years.* God hath ordered Jeſus Chriſt to proclaim the year of *Jubilee* to you; and therefore, tho you feel ſharp pangs in your delivery, take heed of thinking that God doth not pity you; for his heart is turned within him for you.

Ezek. 11. 19. Ezek. 36. 26. Matth. 25. 24. Luc. 4. 18. Luc. 13.

When the people in the ſenſe of their burdens applied themſelves to King *Rehoboam* for ſome Relaxation, he anſwered them roughly, *I will add to your yoak; you have been chaſtiſed with whips, but I will chaſtiſe you with Scorpions.* But when poor Souls, that have the fire of the Spirit of Bondage burning in them, apply themſelves to God for relief, God anſwers them with good and comfortable words, as he did the Angel: *Yet a little while, and he that ſhall come, will come,* that is, with comfort; *and will not tarry.*

1 King. 12. 14. Zech. 1. 13. Heb. 10. 37.

It is you that hinder your ſelves from comfort, and not he: You *refuſe to be comforted,* as the Pſalmiſt did. When *Iſrael,* under their hard task, applied themſelves to *Pharoah*, he gave them cold comfort: *Go, ye are idle, ye are idle.* But when God ſaw *Iſraels* ſorrow: *I have ſeen,* ſaith he, *I have ſeen the affliction of my people*; They ſhall have comfort. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſpeak comfortably to them.*

Pſal. 77. 2. Exod. 5. 17. Iſa. 40. 1.

Secondly, This point, as the former, conduceth to caution, as well as comfort: Surfeit not on this ſweet Goſpel-Doctrine.

It

It is to ſinners returning to God, and that by the way of the Wilderneſs, that this Cordial is given. *Cain* may be full of terrors of Soul, and God pities him not; becauſe he doth but ſtruggle with his terrors: He hath no thoughts, either of turning from ſin, or to God; and ſuch was the caſe of *Saul*, and *Paſhur*, and *Judas*; and upon the like reaſon. Oh, let not ſuch ſinners think to be pitied of God, in their terrors of Conſcience. If a ſinner would be pitied of God, let him ſet his face towards him, and ſet his heart towards him; and then, tho the Lord ſee thee a great way off, he will have compaſſion; He will ſay to thee, *Ruamah, I will have mercy on thee.* And let ſinners look for Pity and Compaſſion from God here: God hath no pity on ſinners after this Life: All the outcries of a
Ez. 8. 18. ſinner in Hell, moves him not to any Compaſſion; *his eye ſhall not ſpare.* Oh whilſt there is Mercy and Bowels in God for poor Sinners, return to him; if you do not, hereafter it will be too late. It may then be ſaid to you, You might have had pity from God, but now he hath none for you. So much for this Doctrine.

I now proceed to the next, from that Clauſe, *And ran.* The Son goes: *I will ariſe, and go to my father.* The Father runs, takes ten ſteps for the Sons one: *He had compaſſion, and ran*, that is, to meet him. As God uſeth to meet *him that worketh righteouſneſs.* Whence we have this Doctrine.

Doct. That God is before-hand with a returning Sinner. He knows Gods preventing Grace. There is no ſinner returns to God, but he is beholding to God for the firſt motion in his heart to it: *I will put a new ſpirit within you, that you may*
Ez. 11. 19, 20. *walk in my ways.*

And when a Sinner is upon his return, God takes him by the arm, and teacheth him to go. When God hath taken away a mans wilfulneſs, and changed his will, and directed it towards himſelf; yet there is weakneſs remaining: When *the ſpirit is*
Matth. 26. 41. *willing, the fleſh is weak.* The ſtreſs of a ſinners Salvation, even after Converſion, hangs upon Gods preventing and aſſiſting
1 Pet. 1. 5. Grace: *We are kept by the power of God through faith unto ſal-*
John 10. 29. *vation.* Saith Chriſt, *My father is greater than all.* And God ſaveth through Faith; becauſe Faith is that which leaneth on the Power of God, as the Ivy doth on the Oak. Trace a

ſinners

ſinners ſalvation from firſt to laſt, and God is either alone, or chief in every ſtep. His election is meerly upon the good pleaſure of God, even without any reſpect to Chriſt as the cauſe or motive: much more, without any reſpect to good in a man, as ſome men would proudly fancy. Chriſt is the means of our ſalvation, but not the motive or reaſon of our Election. We are choſen in him, but not for him: God hath no motive in this, but his own good will. Ephe. 1. 5.

And when Jeſus Chriſt, the ſinners ſurety, redeemed him, the ſinner was no agent: *I alone trod the winepreſs, and of the people there was none with me.* Iſa. 63. 3. And the ſpirit of God uſeth preventing grace and mercy before a ſinners converſion, in the offers of grace: *Ho every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters: Let the wicked forſake his way, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Iſa 55. 1. ver. 7. And God waiteth to be gracious to a ſinner. Iſa. 30. 18. And though the uſe of means belongs to man; yet the efficacy of them is by the ſpirit of God. God draws a ſinner, elſe he comes not: *With loving-kindneſs have I drawn thee.* Jer. 3. 3. And in converſion, a man is the workmanſhip of God. God hath a firſt grace, that points a mans heart towards himſelf; and he hath a ſecond grace, that brings a man home to himſelf. Inthe new creature, God takes care to prevent a miſcarrying womb. Man would return back, after he is gone far towards a ſtate of grace: as when the *Iſraelites* were at the borders of *Canaan*, they would have been returning back into *Egypt*. We do not read, that he who was not far from the Kingdom of God, ever came in: And he that lacked but one thing to be perfect, yet went back. Eph. 2. 10. Mar. 12. 34. Matth. 19. 21. 22.

And when a ſinner at his converſion, is under the Spirit of Bondage, God prevents his deſpair, which otherwiſe he is apt to fall into; and thereby his utter ruine. As we ſee in *Cain*, and *Saul*, and *Judas*; yea, and *Adam* himſelf. It is in the nature of man to get furtheſt from God, when he hath moſt need of his mercy and grace. *Iſrael* died betwixt *Egypt* and *Canaan*, even in the wilderneſs: and ſo would a poor ſinner periſh and loſe himſelf when he is on his way to God, if God did not help him therein, as the mother doth by the new-going child. So that when a ſinner is come home to God, it may be ſaid to him as to *Iſrael*; *Thou haſt ſeen, how that the Lord thy* Deut. 1. 31.

God bare thee, as a man doth his ſon, in all the way that thou went-eſt, untill thou cameſt to this place.

Yea, man doth not only need Gods drawing before, and in converſion: *No man can come to me, except the father draw him.* But alſo when he is brought into a ſtate of grace, he needs it now; *draw me, and we will run after thee.* Men of grace meet with many rubs in their way, even in their own hearts: *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, ſo that they cannot do the things that they would.* And they meet with croſs winds without; ſo that they muſt have help to get ſafe to ſhore, as *Paul* had, and the paſſengers with him. Saints need a voice behind them, to keep them from turning to the right hand, or to the left. They have as great need of this, as *Iſrael* had of the Pillar to guide them in the wilderneſs. They have need of Gods preventing grace, to keep them from evil; as *David* had of *Abigails* counſel, to ſtop him in his bloody thoughts: *The Lord is faithful, who ſhall eſtabliſh you, and keep you from evil.* And they have as much need of exciting grace to that which is good. *David* prayed much for this grace, *Quicken me, according to thy word: quicken us, and we will call on thy name.* So that God is before-hand with men, both before, in, and after their converſion.

John 6. 44. Cant 1. 4. Gal. 5. 17. Acts 2. 7. Iſa. 20. 21. 1 Sam 25. 2 Theſ. 3. 3. Pſa 119. 154, 156, 159. Pſal. 80. 18.

A ſinners ſeeking God, is the effect of Gods ſeeking him: *I am found of them that ſought me not.* We read of Chriſts ſeeking ſinners; but not of loſt ſinners ſeeking him. *Ye have not choſen me, but I have choſen you. We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us.* What was *Paul* doing at his converſion? Seeking the Lord? no; he was perſecuting him: *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* And what was the Gaoler doing at his converſion; pitying *Paul* and *Silas?* No, but whipping them, and putting them faſt in the ſtocks. What was *Adam* doing, when God made the promiſe of Chriſt to him? was he ſeeking God? was he bewailing his ſin? No, he was hiding himſelf from God, and ſtudying excuſes for his ſin.

Rom. 10. 20. Luke 19. 10. John 15. 16. 1 John 4. 19. Acts 9. 4. Acts 16. Gen. 3.

And after the Diſciples were called by Chriſt to him, even then, without him, they could do nothing. When we are in a ſtate of grace, we act as we are acted. Inherent grace doth nothing without aſſiſting grace; no, not in a gracious thought. We need the ſpirit to help our infirmities in all actings of grace: *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. I live, yet not I, but*

John 15. 5. 2 Cor 3. 5. 1 Cor. 15. 10. Gal. 2. 20.

but Chriſt liveth in me. God hath a greater hand in all our actings of grace, than the Devil hath in our ſins. We ſhould ſin, tho there were no Devil to tempt us; but if God ſhould not aſſiſt grace in us, it would not act: there is not enough power in inherent grace to act, without aſſiſting grace joyn it ſelf to it. God gives operations, as well as principles: *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do*: *Peter* wept not bitterly, till Jeſus looked on him. Phil. 2. 13. Luc. 22. 61, 62.

Now the Reaſon of this is. *Firſt*, becauſe Gods great deſign in his way of ſaving ſinners, is to advance his free-grace; he doth all *to the praiſe of the* glory of his grace. God hath no other reaſon of his love to us, but his own good will: he loveth us, becauſe he loveth us: *He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and he will be gracious, to whom he will be gracious*; this was his glory that he ſhewed *Moſes*. And therefore the objects of his free-grace have uſually been the greateſt ſinners; *Paul*, the chief of ſinners; and *Manaſſeh* the nonſuch of ſinners; and *Mary Magdalen* a grand ſinner: And the *Publicans* and harlots entered into the Kingdom of Heaven, before the chief prieſts and elders of the people. Gods love and free-grace was the reaſon, why he gave Chriſt for us: *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his onely begotten ſon for us.* So that it is his good pleaſure, and free grace, which he will have us to glory in: *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.* When *Paul* ſpeaks of his calling, he mentions free-grace over and over: *I, who was a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious, obtained mercy:* And, *The Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant*, ὑπερεπλεόνασε, hath ſuperabounded, or run over. Eph. 1. 6. Deut. 7. 7. Exod. 33. 19. 1 Tim. 1. 2 Chron. 33. Luke 7. Matth 21. 31. John 3. 16. 1 Cor. 1. 13. 1 Tim. 1. 13, 14.

Secondly, God takes this way in chuſing, and calling, and ſaving ſinners, to take man off from boaſting. And God ſeeth need of this; for man is by nature a proud creature, he would *be as God*: Chriſt ſlighted the glory of the world when Satan ſhewed it to him as a temptation. But ſo did not *Adam* and *Eve*; when the Devil told them, if they would eat, they ſhould be as Gods, they did eat, and that greedily. Man hath high towering thoughts of himſelf: *I thank God, I am not as other men. All theſe have I kept from my youth. I am rich and increaſed in goods, and have need of nothing.* Gen. 3. Matth. 4. Luke 18. 11. Matth. 19. 20. Rev. 3. 17.

There is a generation of men in every Age, I am ſure in this, who lay out their time and parts to advance mans will and power, in his converſion and ſalvation, even from election to glory. Now the ſpirit fore-ſeeing this, the Scriptures are the more expreſs in making God all in all in a ſinners converſion and ſalvation: *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*

Pſal. 115 1.

Application. *Firſt*, This informs us, That a convert muſt cry, grace, grace to every ſtep he takes towards God, and to his very inclination to do it. As *David* ſaid to the woman of *Tekoah*, *Is not the hand of Joab in all this?* So, the hand of God is in all this. God hath put it into thy heart to love him, and deſire after him; as *Nehemiah* ſaid, *What God had put in my heart.* *The Lord thy God will circumciſe thy heart to love him.* Grace ſaves men at worſt, and weakeſt: *When thou waſt in thy blood I ſaid unto thee live.* Grace found *Manaſſeh*, dabling in innocent blood; and *Adam* hiding himſelf from God; and *Paul* perſecuting the Saints. And when God hath given you a principle of good, you are beholding to him for the operations of that principle: *Of thine own, O Lord, have we given thee.* As all the good God doth to you, is of grace; ſo is all the good you do for him. There is a neceſſity for it. You cannot pray without it, except the ſpirit help your infirmities; you cannot have a gracious thought without it, you can neither act grace without it; *Without me you can do nothing*; nor grow in grace without it, *From me, is thy fruit found.*

2 Sam. 14.
Neh 2. 12.
Deut. 30. 6.
Exod. 16 6.
1 Chron. 29. 14.
Rom 8 26.
2 Cor 3. 5.
John 15. 5.
Hoſ. 14 8.

Secondly, This ſhews us the folly of any man in a ſtate of grace, that dares undertake any thing without aſſiſting grace. Many new converts think they can go alone; they can pray, and reprove ſin, and reſiſt ſin, and ſhake off temptation, and caſt off the world, and even die for Chriſt: *Peter* was thus brisk; *Tho all men ſhould be offended, yet will not I*: and, *though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*: and yet none denied him ſo as *Peter* did. It is ſaid of *Melanchthon*, that when he firſt preached, he thought to have carried all before him; but alas, he found old *Adam*, too hard for young *Melanchthon*. There are many new converts, through ſelf-confidence, get ſuch falls, that they never claw off all their life, but like *Mephiboſheth*, carry their lame legs to their graves.

Matth. 26. 33.

Satan

Satan is as much vexed at the new birth of a Convert, as *Herod* was at the Birth of Jesus, when he sought to slay him. It is said in the *Revelation*, that the *Dragon* stood before the Woman when she was ready to be delivered, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. Satan sets upon poor Souls whilst Grace is weak, and Exprience wanting. He that beguiled *Eve* when she was perfect, and by the first Temptation that ever he used; how easily may he cheat beginners in the Ways of God, being of so long Practice and Experience. Therefore when God hath set you upon your feet in the way of godliness, let not loose your hold of his hand; be as afraid of it, as the Child is to let loose his Mothers. *Let him take hold of my strength*, saith the Lord. Remember you are not all Spirit, but Flesh also; as it is said of the Horses of *Egypt*. As yet there is more smoak, than flame in the Fire. Affections may be strong, and yet the Judgment be weak, as you see in the Disciples, who would have had Fire from Heaven to consume that Village that did not receive Christ. You may be much in outward Duty, and yet little in self-denial, and that inward Devotion which God only sees, if you look not to it. The Kite preys upon Chickens, when they are young, and so doth Satan upon young Converts. What had Christs Disciples done, if he had not been with them, and kept them for some time? *Whilst I was with them in the world, I kept them; and now I come to thee, father, do thou keep them.*

Matthew 2. Rev. 12 4. 2 Cor. 11. Isa. 27. 5. Isa. 31. 4. Luke 9. 54. John 17. 12.

Oh, you that are newly come into the ways of God, be not puffed up at your change, tho it be a blessed change. You are come into a new World, a brave World, a Kingdom of Grace; but remember the danger *Paul* was in, when he had been taken up into the third Heavens. Oh walk humbly and dependingly upon the Grace of God. Look upon your selves as Vines, as tender Branches, that must have a leaning place. Use the Grace you have, to rest upon God for more.

2 Cor. 12. 8.

Thirdly, This Doctrine may be of use, to Exhort us all to be better acquainted with Gods preventing Grace and Goodness. *David* knew it well: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*: Shall be before-hand with me in deliverance; he shall be before my prayer, yea before my thoughts: *Before they call, I will answer; and whilst they are yet speaking, I will hear*:

Isa. 65. 24.

hear: I will prevent their Prayers. God doth ſo often: *Thou*
Iſa. 64. 3. *didſt terrible things, that we looked not for*; or glorious things.
God ſometimes ſurprizeth his People with great Mercies:
Pſal. 126. 1. *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, we were like*
them that dream. The Father was upon his Prodigal Son un-
expectedly, and before he was aware. *Whilſt they are yet*
Dan. 9. 21, 22, 23. *ſpeaking, I will hear*: we have plenty of inſtances. *Whilſt I*
was ſpeaking in prayer, Gabriel informed me, and told me, At
the beginning of thy ſupplication the commandment came forth.
And chap. 10. 12. *From the firſt day that thou didſt ſet thy*
heart to underſtand, and to chaſten thy ſelf before God; *thy words*
were heard, and I am come for thy words. Whilſt *Peter* was
Acts 10. 44. ſpeaking to the *Gentiles*, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon them. And
Joh. 16. 26, 27. that is an obſervable paſſage of Chriſt to the Diſciples, *I ſay*
not, that I will pray the father for you, for the father himſelf
loveth you. As if he had ſaid, My Mediation is not the
Original cauſe of Gods Love to you; but Gods Love to you
is the riſe of my Mediation for you. And therefore it is
that he doth his people good *with his whole heart, and with his*
Jer. 32. 41. *whole ſoul.*

Fourthly, Learn from hence, even you that have the moſt Grace, to live dependingly upon Grace without you; that ſufficient Grace which ſtood *Paul* inſtead when he was buffeted by Satan. Grace is a Creature, and as yet a weak Creature; like a King in a Cradle. And it hath ſtrong adverſaries. Therefore take hold on the ſtrength of God; he bids
Iſa 27. 5. you do it. But yet you muſt be uſing what Grace you have, or God will not aſſiſt you with his. It is not fit that God
1 Cor. 3. 9. ſhould work, and you ſit ſtill: you muſt be *Labourers together with God.* When the Spirit helps our Infirmities, he uſeth not his own ſtrength alone, but in Conjunction with ours; as the word in the Original ſignifies. So much for the Doctrine,
Rom. 8. 26. from thoſe words, *When he ſaw him yet a great way off, he ran.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

In which is manifeſted, The great deſire that is in God to be reconciled to repenting Sinners. From the laſt part of the 20 Verſe.

And fell on his neck, and kiſſed him.

THeſe were clear ſigns and tokens, that the Father was reconciled to his Son. Thus did *David* by *Abſolom* when reconciled to him, *The king kiſſed Abſolom.* 2 Sam. 14. 33.

4. *Doct.* And this holds forth to us, That God is moſt heartily deſirous to be reconciled to returning Sinners. *Nehemiah* calls God, *A God ready to pardon.* It is his Nature, it is a thing that pleaſeth him: *Mercy pleaſeth him.* Neh. 9. 17. Mic. 7. 18.

There is an everlaſting difference betwixt God and ſinning Angels; but for man, as he preſently made a breach betwixt God and him; ſo God preſently provided to make up the breach. *Thou Lord, art ready to forgive,* ſaith *David,* in his Experience. In the *Hebrew* it is, *A God of propitiation. Moſes* did but ask pardon for the Children of *Iſrael,* for a great ſin, and that after God had pardoned them many a time, and God gave it preſently. *Pardon, I beſeech thee, the iniquity of this people.* What was their iniquity? They choſe *Egypt* rather than *Canaan.* Pardon them *according to the greatneſs of thy mercy, and as thou haſt forgiven this people, from Egypt, even until now*; which had been very often. Now mark the anſwer of God: *And the Lord ſaid, I have pardoned according to thy word*; that is, he would not at preſent caſt them off. Gen. 3. 15. Pſal. 86. 5. Numb. 14. 19, 20. Verſ. 1, 2, 3.

For the further clearing of the point, conſider theſe things. *Firſt,* That God hath provided a meet Mediator, or middle Perſon, betwixt himſelf and loſt man: He did it ſo ſoon as man had ſinned againſt him. You know that eminent place; Gen. 3.

God

2 Cor. 5. 19 *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* God and Christ only had to do in this Reconciliation-work. Man had no hand in it; he goes from God; that was, and is his work. Christ is a meet person to interpose betwixt God and Man; because he is God and Man; he hath the Nature of both. And whereas the Apostle saith, *There is one*
1 Tim. 2. 5. *mediator betwixt God and man, the man Christ Jesus*: He speaks not exclusively of his Divine Nature in the work of Mediation; but Emphatically of that Nature in which *he gave himself a ransom for us*, as it follows. He speaks of the nature in which
Rom. 5. 10. Christ died to reconcile us to God: *If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* And our
Eph. 2. 14. Nature without his Godhead, could never have reconciled us to God. It is Christ, God-man, who is our Peace. And he goes an excellent way, in making our Peace: he lets not one Attribute of God wrong or prejudice another; he satisfieth the Justice of God, as well as procures Mercy
Heb. 7. 2. for the Sinner. He was first *king of righteousness*, and so *king of peace.*

Christ takes the wrongs that Sinners have done to God, upon himself, as *Paul* offered *Philemon*, to take *Onesimus* his, by way of suretiship. One great end of Christs Death,
Dan. 9. 24, 26. was *to make reconciliation. The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.* Why then? *To make Reconciliation*, to
John 15. 15 bring repenting Sinners into a state of Friendship with God. *Ye are my friends.* And our Friendship with God is made firmer by Christ than it was in the state of Innocency. For then God and Man fell out quickly; but now God is *long-*
Neh. 9. 17. *suffering* and *slow to anger.* Christ is the Conservator of
Exod. 34. 6. our Peace with God, as well as the maker of it; and this by
1 John 2. 2. being *our advocate with the Father*; *He appears continually in*
Heb. 9 24. *the presence of God for us.* As Princes and free States, have their Agents in forreign Courts, to preserve a good Correspondence; so Christ is our Agent in Heaven: *He appears in the presence of God for us.*

2 Cor. 5. 18. *Secondly*, God hath sent forth a word of Reconciliation to the World, a Proclamation of his mind this way, of his willingness to be at Peace with Sinners upon their return to him. God tells Sinners, he will be Friends with them. A wonderful thing:

thing! Will God indeed be friends with ſinful man? As *Solomon* ſaid, *Will God indeed dwell with men upon earth?* 2 Chron. 6.18.

And the manner wherein God makes this gracious overture, makes it the more wonderful. For 1. he intreats men in the caſe: *As tho God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſts ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.* If a King ſhould beſeech a rebellious Subject to be friends, how would this amaze us? God doth ſo; the greater ſeeks to the leſſer. *Abraham* was the better man, and yet he ſought to *Lot* for Peace, and that there might be no difference betwixt them: *Let there be no ſtrife, I pray thee, betwixt me and thee.* Such and much more, is Gods Condeſcention to us. And as it is an intreating word, ſo it is a promiſing word, and ſuch as hath wonder in it. If the wicked will turn from all his ſins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right; he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die: All his tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be mentioned unto him: that is, neither to prejudice, nor ſo much as upbraid him. *In thoſe days, and at that time, ſaith the Lord, the iniquity of Iſrael ſhall be ſought for, and there ſhall be none: and the ſins of Judah, and they ſhall not be found; for I will pardon thoſe whom I reſerve.* When? In thoſe days, and at that time, *when I am pacified towards them.* 2 Cor. 5. 20. Gen. 13. 8. Eze 18.21,22. Jer. 50. 20. Ez. 16. 63.

Job heard not a word from God of his unadviſed ſpeeches, when God and he came together again, tho he had been guilty of many. But God juſtifies him before his Friends: *Ye have not ſpoken of me the thing that is right, as my ſervant Job hath.* A reconciled Sinner is as if had not ſinned; his ſins are blotted out, as a debt diſcharged is croſſed in the Book: *I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions, for my own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins. Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was againſt us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his croſs.* And his ſins are caſt into the bottom of the Sea, as *Pharoah* and his Hoſt were. It is ſaid, they ſank like Lead in the Sea. The caſting of a great Stone, or Iron, or Lead, into the Sea, was anciently the Emblem of everlaſting forgetfulneſs. When the Father of the Prodigal met him, he did not caſt his diſobedience and rioting living in his Teeth; but fell on his neck and Job 42. ver. 7. Iſaiah 43 25. Col. 2. 14. Mich 7. 19. Exod. 15. 10.

kiſſed him; as reſolved to caſt them away for ever out of his ſight.

Third'y, God hath ordained Miniſters of Reconciliation betwixt himſelf and ſinners, even ſuch are moſt ſutable to our Nature and State here; men like our ſelves, *ſubject to the like paſſions*; as the Apoſtle *James* ſaith of *Elias*. *He hath given to us us the miniſtry of reconciliation, and he hath committed to us the word of reconciliation:* To us, who tho Apoſtles, yet men of like paſſion with you, as *Paul* ſaid to the Prieſts of *Jupiter*, and the people.

James 5. 17.
2 Cor. 5. 19
Acts 14. 15.

It is a Mercy that God ſpeaks not immed ately, or himſelf to poor ſinners: His Majeſty would be terrible to them, as it was to *Iſrael* at the giving of the Law. They ſaid to *Moſes*, *Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God ſpeak with us, leſt we die.* And it is a Mercy, that God makes not Angels his Miniſters to poor ſinners. For it conſiſts not with the nature of Angels, to have ſuch ordinary converſe with men, as the Miniſters of Chriſt muſt have. Sinners could not have that free acceſs to Angels with their complaints and grievances, as they may have to men. God uſeth Angels in errands to ſome men; but it hath been but ſometimes, and in extraordiary caſes. But Gods miniſters of Reconciliation are ſuch as poor Souls may ordinarily converſe with. And again, we are at a greater certainty in mens being Gods Miniſters to us, than if Angels were; becauſe men accompany and converſe with us, and are known to us; they are *fleſh of our fleſh, and bone of our bone*; as the Tribes of *Iſrael* ſaid to *David*, when they made him King over them. But Satan can transform himſelf into an Angel of Light. As Chriſt in his Humane Nature was the great Goſpel-Miniſter, and exerciſed his Miniſtry in calling poor Sinners, and making their Peace with God; ſo he hath ſent men to be his Miniſters to Preach himſelf to the World.

Exod. 20. 19.
2 Sam. 5. 1.
2 Cor. 11. 4.
Matth. 28. 19.

Chriſt Preached to Sinners in that Nature wherein he died for them; *and when he was aſcended on high, he gave gifts*, not to Angels, but to Men, for the work of the Miniſtry. This is the moſt likely way to work upon them, and to bring them to God. *The Lord thy God will raiſe up unto thee a Prophet from the midſt of thee, of thy brethren; unto him ye ſhall hearken:*

ken. This way *Elihu* thought to work upon *Job*: *Behold, I am according to thy wish, I am also formed out of the clay.* Job 33. 6, 7.
And besides this, the weaker the Instruments are that are used in this great work, the greater Gods Glory will be. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* 2 Cor. 4. 7.
God is with the Mouths of Ministers, as with *Moses*; and in all Work done by them on the Sinners heart, we must say, Here hath been God and his Grace: *Not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.* 1 Cor. 15. 10.

Fourthly, Tho God hath not made use of Angels to be his ordinary Ministers of Reconciliation; yet when the Reconciler and Peace-maker came into the World, he made them his extraordinary Heralds to Solemnize the thing. *Suddenly there was with the Angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth Peace,* Good-will towards men. Some of the Fathers read it, Peace on Earth to men of good will, and so the *Rhem.* Translation. But *Maldonate* the Jesuit confesseth, That all the *Greek* Copies now in being, have it, Good will (that is, of God) unto men. And *Bellarmine* himself owns it, and so the *Greek* word, εὐδοκία, in *Luke*, signifies the Good will of God towards men. Luke 2. 14.

And here we see, how glad the holy Angels are of Gods reconciling Sinners to himself by Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, Consider the persons to whom God is willing to be reconciled, not only Sinners, but the chief of Sinners; such a violent Persecutor and Blasphemer of Christ as *Paul* was. They were Publicans and Harlots, the most notorious Sinners, that Jesus often conversed with, and brought into the Kingdom of God. *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners to hear him.* 1 Tim. 1. 13.
God offers not Peace only to Sinners of fewer and lesser sins, but to Sinners of the greatest rank. *Come now, saith the Lord, and let us reason together:* (Now, that is, now ye are returning to me) *tho your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Not that sin can change its colour; but the Sinner may, he may become a Saint, a man night to God, and in friendship with God, as *Abraham* was. The drift of the Expressions is to shew to men, that God is willing to Matt. 21. 1, 31. Isa. 1. 18. Jam. 2. 23.

be at peace with the greateſt of ſinners, upon the terms of repentance; and that the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son cleanſeth us from all ſin. Take but one place more for this: *they ſay,* (yea, the Law ſaith) Deut 24. 4. *If a man put away his wife, and ſhe become another mans, ſhall he return to her again?* (no, this is an abomination) *But thou haſt played the harlot with many lovers, yet return to me, ſaith the Lord*: God will not be limited by that law.

1 John 1. 7. Jer. 3. 1.

Sixthly, Conſider how God bewails, as it were, mens refuſing peace with him: *Iſrael would have none of me:—O my people, what have I done to thee? wherein have I wearied thee? teſtify againſt me.* How doth God humble himſelf, in reaſoning with men why they will keep at a diſtance from him; he clears himſelf in the caſe, and all the guilt lies upon man. And ſo the Lord Jeſus, weeping over *Jeruſalem*: *O that thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* Chriſt ſeems to do as *Phaltiel*, he followed his Wife weeping, when ſhe left him.

Iſa. 18. 11. Mic. 6 3. Pſal. 1 13. Luke 19. 42. 2 Sam 3. 16.

Seventhly, God by his Son Jeſus Chriſt takes away and deſtroys the enmity that is in mans nature againſt him, and againſt peace and friendſhip with him. Every man by nature is not only a ſtranger to God, but hath enmity in him againſt God, is a hater of God. Now Chriſt, by his blood, ſlays this enmity in all the elect: he brings them into a way of complacency and deareſt friendſhip with God. So that it is their property to *chuſe the things that pleaſe God*; as Chriſt ſaid of himſelf, *I do always the things that pleaſe my father*: ſo every converted ſinner can ſay, I would always do the things that pleaſe God: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* ſaith *Saul*, as ſoon as ever he was converted. Now all theſe things laid together, ſhew the great deſire that is in God to be reconciled to returning ſinners.

Rom. 8. 7. Rom. 1. 30. Col. 1. 21. Iſa. 56. 4. John 1. 29.

Uſe. This ſhould put us upon admiring the great affection of God to the ſalvation of ſinners. He is not indifferent whether man be ſaved, or not: but he is earneſt for their ſalvation. *Why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael? O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem! how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldſt not? Oh that there were ſuch an heart in them, that they would fear me, and*

Eze. 33. 11. Matth 23. 37.

and keep all my commandments, always, that it may be well with them, and with their children for ever? God is so affectionate in the case, that he seeks to sinners; he stoops to them: *As tho God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead, be ye reconciled to God: This is not the manner of man:* as *David* said of God, in his own case. Doth a Father beseech a disobedient Son, to be at peace with him, and to inherit his estate? Or doth a Prince intreat a rebellious subject to be at peace with him? No. God may say to sinners, *I am God, and not man*, and therefore I can and do stoop thus to poor sinners. Observe that in Isa. 27. *Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.* Gods Strength and Power lies much in this, that he can pardon sin, and be reconciled to sinners: *Let the power of my Lord be great according as thou hast said: The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.* This is the strength of God a sinner should take hold of, to make peace with him, that he can and *will have mercy on whom he will have mercy*; and *be gracious to whom he will be gracious.* If a sinner should lay hold on the strength of men and Angels, he could not make peace with God: *To which of the Saints wilt thou turn?* So, to which of the Angels wilt thou turn, turn thee toward God, take hold of his strength, of his power to pardon sin, of his power to be merciful to sinners: do this by faith, and this is the way to make peace with God.

2 Cor. 5. 20. 2 Sam. 7 19. Num. 14 17. Exod. 33. 19. Job 5 1.

But then you must know, it is the humbled and self-judging sinner; the sinner that hath his face towards God, as this prodigal had towards his Father, that God gives leave to take hold of his strength, to make peace with him: if the presumptuous sinner, the sinner that abuseth Gods long-suffering, and mercy, and grace, shall offer to lay hold on Gods strength; God will knock off his sawcy fingers: *He will by no means clear the guilty.* And they are the guilty that say, *I shall have peace tho I walk in the imagination of my own heart.* But let the prodigal Son, that is come to himself, and would gladly come to his Father, let him do it and welcome.

Deut. 29. 19.

There are other Uses of this point, but they will fall in with the handling of the next verse.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

Sheweth, That Gods forgiving of ſins, doth not for the future take away the Duty of Confeſſion. From the 21ſt. Verſe.

And the ſon ſaid unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight, &c.

I Opened theſe words before, in the 18. and 19. Verſes, being the ſame here repeated. But there is one conſideration to be had of them, which could not then be properly handled; but may fitly be done in this place. And that is, the time when the prodigal made this pathetick confeſſion to his Father: not before, but after his Father fell upon his neck, and kiſſed him. Whence we have this Doctrine.

Doct. That there is place for the confeſſion of ſin, after God is reconciled to the ſinner. When the prodigals Father had embraced him, and therein ſhewed his reconciliation to him; then the Son ſaid, Father, I have ſinned. The kindlyeſt part of repentance for ſin, is after the ſinner knows he is pardoned: *That thou may-ſt remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more*, that is, juſtify thy ſelf as thou haſt been uſed to do, *becauſe of thy ſhame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou haſt done, ſaith the Lord God. David* was a frequent confeſſor, and bewailer of his ſin, after that *Nathan* had told him, *The Lord hath done away thy ſin*: as we ſee in *Pſal.* 51. and other of his penitential Pſalms. We find *Paul* when called to obtain mercy and grace, often confeſſed his phariſaical ſins; *I am not meet to be called an Apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the Church of God.* And ſo in 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. And Jeſus firſt gave *Peter* a gracious look, before he went out and wept bitterly.

Ezek. 16. 63.

1 Cor 15. 9.

Luc. 22. 61, 62.

'Tis

'Tis true, there is a legal preparatory Repentance before, and in order to converſion, and ſaving faith. And in this repentance, the ſoul may be ſick of ſin, as *Judas* was; and confeſs ſin, as he did: *I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.* And may vomit up ſin; and yet return to it. A man may confeſs ſin much, and be much troubled in conſcience for it, and yet this be but the firſt conception of Repentance, and perhaps a falſe one, or ſuch a one as miſcarries. That pricking at the heart, as terrible as it was, in thoſe *Jews*, *Acts* 2. 37. it was not perfect repentance. And therefore when hereupon they asked the Apoſtles, what they ſhould do? *Peter* anſwered, Repent. Indeed this conception did not miſcarry, but doubtleſs there are ſome ſinners who have ſcorched conſciences, ſome ſparkles of Hell-fire therein, ſome drops of Gods wrath for ſin, that makes them cry out of ſin, and yet come not to ſaving repentance; all this may prove abortive. Matth 27. 4. 2 Pet 2. 22.

Foul weather may make ſtones weep, but they are ſtones ſtill. And therefore, ſo ſoon as the fire is out of the conſcience, ſin is little trouble to them. Legal ſorrow for ſin may break the heart, but not melt it, or change the frame of it. As a hammer will break Ice to pieces, but it is Ice ſtill; it is the Sun that muſt melt it and thaw it into water: ſo it is the ſence of the free and rich grace of the Goſpel, that melts the heart of a ſinner, and changeth it into a new heart. *Ezek.* 11. 19. Bare legal repenting of ſin, doth but ſuſpend the Acts of ſin at preſent: for ſo ſoon as the pain is over, and terrors of conſcience gone, a man is free to ſin again. As a child, while the fire is in the Coals, will not meddle with them, but when the fire is out, then he will play with them, and dirty, and fully himſelf without any concern. But there is alſo a repenting of ſin, and confeſſion of ſin, after converſion, and that a man is now come into a ſtate of grace; and this is evangelical repentance, and confeſſion of ſin; being wrought and ſet a work by the ſence and taſte of the mercy and grace of the Goſpel. Of this we read in the Prophet, *Surely after I was turned, I repented, and after I was inſtructed, I ſmote upon my thigh; I was aſhamed, yea even confounded.* Jer. 31. 19.

The moſt holy and gracious perſons, have moſt freely confeſſed the ſins of their unregenerate ſtate. *David* confeſſed the

ſins

sins of his youth. And *Paul* confessed himself to have been
Eph. 3. 8. the chief of sinners. Saints are never so humbled in the sence of sin, as when they are most sensible of the riches of the grace of God; *the goodness of God leads them to repentance*, Rom. 2. 4. It hardens other men, but melts them. And their experimental knowledg hereof, makes them the more apprehensive of the vileness of sin that dwelleth in them, Rom. 7. When *Isaiah* had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts, then he
Isa. 6. 5. acknowledged himself *a man of unclean lips*, and cryed out, *wo is me*. And when *Job* had seen the Lord, then he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. So that the ingenuous
Job 42. 5, 16. confession of sin, is the fruit of grace. The *Jews look not on*
Zec. 12. 10. *him, whom they pierced, nor mourn over him*, till *the spirit of*
Luc. 7. 17. *grace and supplications* be poured upon them. Much was forgiven that Woman, and she knew it, therefore she loved much, and she wept much.

The people of God sin as well as other men, tho not at the
2 Kings 8 46. same rate, nor after the same manner. *If thy people sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not)*: If they bethink themselves, saying, *we have sinned, and have done perversly; then hear thou in heaven, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee.* As the Apostle *John* saith, *If we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves*: so he saith, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins*, 2 John. 1. 9, 10.

Luther hath this passage: *Before I saw into the point of the forgiveness of sins through Grace in Christ, I looked upon the very word repentance and confession of sin as terrible words, I did even hate them, and wished they had not been in the Bible: but after I understood by experience gospel-remission of sin, and gospel righteousness; I then loved repentance, and was much in acknowledging my sins.* Oh, when a man considers, how God hath pardoned him, and spared him, when he was in the hands of justice, which might have damned him; this melts him, and makes him pour out confessions of Sin, and groans for it more than the eye can do tears. When *Saul* saw *David* had spared his Life, when it was in his power to have taken it away, he wept, and
1 Sam. 24 16. confessed, *my Son David, thou art more righteous than I:* All acts of grace that God shews to his Saints, do aggravate the vileness of sin in their sight. The excellency of grace being this, that it makes sin appear to be exceeding sinful, *Rom.* 7.

The

The sinfulness of sin is discerned only by Saints; a spot in Cambrick is far worse than in Sackloath; and a blur is seen more in a fine picture, than in unwrought wood. As no man hath a right Knowledg of God, till he be in the Covenant of Grace: *Then they shall all know me from the greatest to the least.* So no man hath a right knowledg of the vileness and sinfulness of sin, till he be in a state of Grace and of Peace with God. It is the light of Grace that plainly discovers the Holiness of God, and the vileness of Sin.

Jer. 31. 34. Zech. 12. 10 Rom. 7.

For the further opening of the Doctrine, Consider the Properties of Confession in a state of Grace and Reconciliation to God. It is free, and full, and feeling, with self-abasing, self-confusion, and self-loathing.

First, It is free and ingenuous, from a Principle within. *Pharoah* was forced to confess his sins, and so was *Saul.* The nature of man, since the fall, is to hide and cover his sins; which is Gods work, and not mans. *If I covered my sin, as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.* But Grace disposeth men to confess, and lay open, and aggravate their sins: *Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done. And Lord, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly.*

1 Sam. 15. Job 31. 33. 2 Sam. 24. 10. Verse 17.

How did *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, and *Daniel*, abound in the confession of sin, their own as well as the peoples? *We, we, we*, have done so and so. Not that they think, God doth not know their sins, till they acknowledg them. *Lord, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee.* Yea they know, that God knows their sins better than themselves. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; see if there be any wicked way in me.* But they confess sin to give Glory to God; so that they confess sin freely, from a principle of Grace.

Psal. 69. 5. Psal. 139. 23.

Secondly, It is full; they confess all they know, and implicitly, those they know not. *Lord, who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret sins.* They confess small as well as great sins. *Davids* heart smote him, for cutting off *Sauls* Skirt. Whatsoever is sin, they charge themselves with it; yea, they often charge themselves with that they do but fear to be sinful. Their Infirmities and humane Frailties go to their hearts, and affect, and afflict them. The Spouse confessed her indisposition, and dulness; *I sleep, but my heart waketh.*

Psal. 19. 12. 1 Sam. 24. Cant. 5. 2.

Thirdly, They confeſs ſinfeelingly, with great complaints and bemoaning of themſelves: *Lord, why are our hearts hardened from thy fear? O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me!* The Soul of a godly man is in an Agony in the Confeſſion of ſin, as Chriſts was in ſuffering for it; the Soul is melted, as that Womans was, in *Luke* 7.

Iſa. 63. 17. Rom. 7. 24.

Fourthly, It is done with ſelf-abaſing, as here in the Text: *Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight; and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.* And ſo *Paul*, *I am not meet to be called an Apoſtle; becauſe I perſecuted the Church of God.* They do it with ſelf-confuſion, they are aſhamed to look God in the face: *That thou mayeſt remember and be confounded, becauſe of thy ſhame, for all that thou haſt done, when I am pacified towards thee, ſaith the Lord.* Bad men ſin, and are not aſhamed; and they confeſs ſin without ſhame and ſelf-confuſion: *Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither can they bluſh.* When men are in the dark, they do not bluſh; but when they come to the light, it makes them do it: So when men are enlighten'd by the Grace of God, then they are aſhamed and bluſh at their ſins, they confeſs to God, *We lye down in our ſhame, and our confuſion covereth us; for we have ſinned againſt the Lord our God.*

1 Cor. 15. 9. Ezek. 16. 63. Jer. 6. 15. Jer. 3. 25.

Fifthly, They do it with ſelf-loathing, and ſin-loathing; ſelf, as well as ſin; as a man after a Surfeit, ſometimes doth not only loath the meat, but the very diſh out of which he did eat it. This property is a Promiſe of the Covenant of Grace: *Then ſhall ye remember your own evil ways and doings that have not been good, and ſhall loath your ſelves in your own ſight, for your iniquities.* When is this? *When the Lord hath given them a new heart, and put his ſpirit within them, and ſprinkled clean water upon them, and ſaved them from all their uncleanneſſes.*

Ezek 36. 31. Ezek. 36. 25.

Application. *Firſt*, This informs us, and may ſettle us in this truth; That the confeſſion of ſin is the duty of the beſt of Saints. They are not without ſin, ſin dwells in them, as it did in holy *Paul*; and will in all Saints, whilſt they are in the body; and therefore confeſſion of ſin muſt be a ſtanding duty, and laſt as long. As long as the Body gathers ill humors,

Rom. 7. 16.

mors, it will need vomits and purges, or ſome other Evacuation.

Tho God have promiſed not to mention their ſins to them that return to him; and we ſee an evidence for it, in the Fathers carriage to his returning Prodigal Son; yet we muſt not omit to mention them. *If we confeſs our ſins*: I *John*, as well as you. *If thy people ſin againſt thee (for there is no man that ſinneth not) and thou be angry with them; if they ſhall bethink themſelves, and make ſupplication, ſaying, We have ſinned and done perverſly*; then hear thou their prayer.——

Ez. 18. 22. 1 John 1. 9. 1 Kings 8. 46, 47.

Saints are to pray for pardon of ſin; and therefore to confeſs ſin. Our Lord Jeſus appoints even his Diſciples to pray for the pardon of ſin. And therefore they greatly err, that ſay, Saints need not Repentance for ſin, nor confeſſion of ſin. If God repent himſelf of their puniſhment, then they ſhould not think it below them to confeſs the ſins for which it was due. Some ſay, God ſeeth no ſin in his people. But why then was God ſo angry with *Moſes*? And why did he ſo ſeverely puniſh *Eli*, and *David*? And why did Chriſt ſo threaten the Angel of the Church of *Epheſus*?

Matth. 6. 12. Numb. 23. 21. Exod. 4. 14. 1 Sam. 3 13. 2 Sam. 12 10, 11. Rev. 2. 5.

If Scripture-Saints were here to anſwer theſe men, they would do it with indignation; and ſince they are not, let their practice do it. The beſt of the godly know that they have need to confeſs ſin, and to mourn for it; hereby to keep a ſenſe of the ſinfulneſs of ſin upon their hearts, and to keep the ſenſe of the pardon of ſin in their Conſcience, and to keep them humble, and to preſerve them from Self exalting, and to ſhew them their need of Chriſt, and what debts he hath paid for them. And let me urge you to ſuch a Confeſſion of ſin as I have deſcribed by theſe conſiderations.

Pſal. 51 16, 17. Pſal. 102 17.

Firſt, You will prevent Gods Sentence againſt you, by your own: *If we judg our ſelves, we ſhall not be judged.* By this Confeſſion of ſin, we ſtand before God in the breach, that he deſtroy us not.

1 Cor. 11. 31. Pſal. 106. 23.

Secondly, Confeſſion of ſin glorifies God. Tho it do not ſatisfie his Juſtice, yet it glorifies his Juſtice, and his other Attributes. *My ſon, confeſs thy ſin, and give Glory to God.* It glorifieth his Juſtice in puniſhing ſin, and his Mercy in pardoning ſin, and his Power in pardoning great ſins.

Joſ. 7. 19.

Thirdly, Gods people do ease their Souls of a great deal of pain, by an igenuous Confession of their sins: *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.* By such a Confession of sin, they cast up the evil that offends their Conscience. Whilst the arrow-head sticks in the wound, incurable. Pains and Passions are allayed by utterance, and giving them vent; much more the wounds of Conscience, by plucking out the sting of sin in Confession.

Psal 32. 3

Fourthly, By such confession of sin we shame and disappoint the Devil. The Serpent taught our first Parents to excuse their sin, but not to confess it. The Devil makes this his work, he would confess our sins for us, he is *the Accuser of the Brethren.* Now if we apply our selves to this necessary duty, as we should do, we put him out of this Office. We had better take shame to our selves for our sins, here, before a gracious God; than be shamed with them before Men, and Angels, and Devils, and a Holy and Righteous God, hereafter; one of these must be. If the Apostles present troubles made them a Spectacle to the World; surely then mens confessed and unpardoned sins, will much more do it; will make them a Spectacle to the World, to God, to Angels, and to Men.

Rev. 12. 10.

1 Cor. 4. 9.

Fifthly, The best tryal of our Religion, is a Reflection on our selves, accusing and judging our selves; these are the things that argue a *spirit in you without guile*, which is the moity, or one half of your blessedness. Your very thoughts of confessing and bewailing sin before God, are pleasing to him: *I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my son.*

Psal. 32. 2.

Psal 32. 5.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

Giveth the Explication of the 22. and 23. Verſes following. And thence ſheweth, That both Heaven and Earth are rejoyced at the Converſion of a Sinner. And that God deals not with humble Sinners according to their unworthineſs.

WE have done with the meeting, and greeting of the Father, and his repenting Son. In the 22, and 23. ver. following, We have the Son's as obſervable entertainment.

But the Father ſaid unto the Servants, Bring forth the beſt Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his hand, and Shooes on his feet. Verſe 22. *And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry.* Verſe 23.

The Son had confeſſed, That he was not worthy to be ſo called; but his Father treats him as God did *Ephraim*, that is, as his dear Son, and as *a pleaſant Child.* God deals not with humbled, ſelf-judging, and ſelf-abaſing Sinners, after their deſerts; but in his way of free-Grace. Jer. 31. 20. Pſal. 103. 10.

The Father ſaid unto his Servants: Who are they?

Firſt, We are not to exclude the Holy Angels; who, as they were imployed in rejoycing at Chriſt's coming into the World to ſave loſt Sinners, *Luke* 2. 14. So they have the ſame imployment, when Sinners are converted unto God. *There is joy in the preſence of the Angels of God over one ſinner that repenteth.*

But primarily, The Servants of God here, are the Miniſters of the Goſpel, to whom is commmitted the Word and Miniſtry of Reconciliation. Chriſt imploys them, as he did himſelf in his Miniſtry, *To heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* 2 Cor. 5. 18. Luke 4. 18.

Bring

Bring forth the beſt robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and ſhooes on his feet. The poor prodigal was grown ragged and bare when he came from his far country; he had neither cloaths on his back, nor Shooes on his feet.

Gen. 3. 7. *Adam* and *Eves* nakedneſs after they had ſinned, ſhews that every man is ſo, in his natural condition, naked and bare;

Ez. 16. 4, 5. *Thou waſt not ſwadled at all, in the day that thou waſt born.* When *Iſrael* was to come out of *Egypt*, it ſeems they were but bare in clothes; and therefore God ordered them to borrow

Exod. 12. 35. of the *Egyptians*. This was the prodigals caſe, when he came forth of his far country. It was with him, as it was with the *Jews* High Prieſt when he came out of captivity, he

Zach. 3. 3. had on him filthy garments: ſo that the Lord commanded thoſe that ſtood before him *to take away his filthy garments.* And to the High Prieſt himſelf, he ſaid, *Behold I have cauſed thine iniquities to paſs from thee, and I will cloath thee with change*

Ezk. 16. 8. *of Raiment.* And thus ſaid the Lord to *Iſrael* his new-born child, *I ſpread my skirts over thee, and covered thy nakedneſs.* This ſpreading the skirts over one, was alſo a nuptial or marriage

Ruth 3. 9. right: therefore *Ruth* ſaid to *Boaz, ſpread thy skirt over thy handmaid, for thou art a near kinſman.*

When God had promiſed Chriſt to our firſt parents, then he provided cloaths alſo for them. They had but Fig-leaves be-

Gen. 3. 21. fore; but after they had cloaths of Gods own making. So here, when the Father had ſhewed himſelf reconciled to his returning Son, he takes care to cloath him. To cover his ſins as he did *Joſhua's*: *Behold, I have cauſed thine iniquities to paſs from thee*: and to adorn him with grace; *and I will cloathe thee with change of Raiment.* So that this beſt Robe, ſets out the

Rom. 13 14. righteouſneſs of Chriſt, both imputed, and imparted to us. *Put*

Gal. 3. 27. *ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And *as many as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt.* Chriſt is both a Sinners ſatisfaction, or righteouſneſs, and his ſanctification. *Who, of God,*

1 Cor. 1. 30. *is made unto us, righteouſneſs and ſanctification.* Chriſts righte-

Gen. 27. 27. ouſneſs upon a repenting ſinner, is like *Jacobs* elder brothers Garments on him: *See, the ſmell of my ſon, is as the ſmell of a field which the Lord hath bleſſed.*

And put a ring on his hand. Some Expoſitors ſay, this ſets

Ephe. 1. 13. out the ſealing of the Spirit, after a man believes: *In whom, after ye believed, ye were ſealed with the holy ſpirit of promiſe.*

But

But if this be part of the meaning of these expressions, yet it is not all. Amongst the *Romans*, a ring was a sign of lost liberty recovered: and so here it was with the lost Son; he recovered the sonship he had forfeited, as himself confessed, *I am no more worthy to be called thy son.*

And moreover this puting of a Ring on his hand, may import the riches of grace that God sheweth to returning sinners: *in whom we have the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace wherein he hath abounded towards us.* And it may also import, the honour that God doth to sinners, when they become Saints. Thus when *Pharaoh* would honour *Joseph*, he gave him his own Ring. And so did the King, when he honoured *Mordecai.* And, *This honour*, saith the Psalmist, *have all his saints.* Ephe. 1. 7, 8. Gen. 41. 42. Esth. 8. 2. Psa. 149. 9.

And put shooes on his feet. He was barefoot it seems, when he came out of his far countrey. It was not with him, as with the children of *Israel* those fourty years in the wilderness: *Thy shooes are not waxed old on thy feet.* Here we see, the Father cloathes his returning Son, from top to toe. Whether this signifieth, that piece of Armour, in Eph. 6. 15. *Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace*; I cannot determine; but we shall, I hope, see more clearly into it, when we come to the particular points in the words. Deut. 29. 5.

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry. Here was a strange difference betwixt the prodigals fare in the far countrey, and at his Fathers house: there, he fed with the swine he tended; nay, *Would have been glad of the husks that the swine did eat.* But here, *the fatted calf* is killed for him. He thought onely of bread in his Fathers house, and he thought his Fathers servants happy, that had enough of that. But he had not only bread, when he came home to his Father, not onely ordinary food, but dainties, *the fatted Calf.* Some say, it signifieth Christ, or the Lamb slain for sinners: *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world: the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* And it is true also, that God gives us Christ to eat. And Christ himself gives us his flesh to eat, as meat indeed, *John* 6 55. ver. 15, 16. ver. 17. John 1. 29. Rev. 13. 8.

This is certain, It was to heighten his returning Sons entertainment; he had the best provision made for him: as the Lord provided for *Israel* in the willderness, he fed them with Manna, Exod. 16. 15;

with

Pſal. 78 25. Rev. 2. 17. John 4. 32. *with bread from heaven, with Angels food.* God entertains a returning ſinner with dainties, with *hidden manna*; with *meat that the world knoweth not of*, as Jeſus ſaid to his diſciples, in his own caſe.

Thus much for the opening of the words, thus far. Now before we come to the particular Points, couched in the ſeveral parabolical expreſſions; I ſhall ſpeak to the Doctrine ariſeing from the general ſcope of theſe words.

Doct. That there is joy in Heaven, and on earth too, at the converſion of a ſinner.

For as it is ſaid here by the Father at the return of his loſt Son, *let us eat and be merry*: So, in that parable of the loſt ſheep, it is ſaid, *That joy ſhall be in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth.* And in that of the loſt piece of ſilver, that there is joy in the preſence of the Angels of God, over one ſinner that repenteth.

In opening and confirming this Doctrine, I ſhall ſhew you,

Firſt. That there is joy in Heaven, and on Earth, at the converſion of ſinners.

Secondly, Why it is ſo.

Thirdly. Wherein it is declared.

Firſt, That there is joy in Heaven, and on Earth, at the converſion of a ſinner. And 1. God rejoyceth at it; even all the Perſons of the Godhead. We find that God was *refreſhed* with his works of creation; *On the ſeventh day he reſted*, that is, from his works of creation, *and was refreſhed*: much more is God refreſhed with the new creature; becauſe it is a more excellent piece of work than the old: as it is ſaid of the new Covenant, that it is *a better Covenant.*

Exod. 31. 17. Heb. 8. 6.

The Father of the prodigal Son repreſents the joy of God the Father, at the converſion of a ſinner. *It was meet that we ſhould make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again.* v. 32. as *Jacob* was revived, when he heard that *Joſeph* was alive; *It is enough, Joſeph my ſon is yet alive.* So doth God rejoyce and is refreſhed, when he ſees a man that hath been dead in ſin, brought to life. But why is it ſo?

Gen. 45. 27. 28.

1. *Reaſ.*

1. *Reaſ.* Becauſe God now ſees his own nature in a man again, his own likeneſs and image. He may call a convert, *His own bowels*, as *Paul* did *Oneſimus*. God hath reſpect to him, and dwells with him, within his heart; he delights in that place, next to heaven. And God converſeth with him; accounts him his friend, as he did *Abraham*, and ſpeaks mouth to mouth with him as with *Moſes*: he is a man after Gods own heart, as he ſaid of *David*. Philem. 12. Iſa. 65. 2. Iſa. 57 15. Iſa. 41. 8. Exod. 34. Acts 13. 22.

2 Becauſe a convert is a uſeful man to God. In a favourable acceptation he is; for ſtrictly God hath no need of Saints, or Angels. *If thou beeſt righteous, what giveſt thou him?* But God is pleaſed to eſteem him a uſeful man: he ſets ſuch a one *a part for himſelf*: he is amongſt the *firſt fruits of his creatures.* A convert is a man of ſelf-denial, he is all for God: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Like *Abrahams* ſervant, that was more careful of his Maſters buſineſs, than of himſelf; he would diſpatch his buſineſs before he would eat a bit of bread. He is a man of that ſpirit and temper, that he would have ſin out of the world, as well as out of himſelf; and therefore is grieved at the wickedneſs of men; *I beheld the tranſgreſſors, and was grieved. Lots* righteous ſoul was *vexed from day to day* with the unlawful deeds of the *Sodomites.* Job 35. 7. Pſal. 4. 3. Jam. 1 18. Act. 9. 6. Gen. 24. Pſal. 119. 158. 2 Pet. 2. 8.

Secondly, Jeſus Chriſt rejoyceth at the converſion of ſinners: They are *the ſons of men, with whom are his delights.* Prov. 8. 31.

Reaſ. And the reaſon of it is, becauſe in them he ſeeth the travel of his ſoul: *He ſhall ſee the travel of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied.* A woman hath not ſo great joy to ſee a man-child born into the world, tho that is very great, as Chriſt is to ſee a ſinner born again. We find how he gloryed in that converted woman that had been a notorious ſinner: ſhe is ſuppoſed to be *Mary Magdalen*: *ſeſt thou this woman?* Saith Chriſt to *Simon*: what a changed woman is ſhee! how ſhe loves me, more than ever ſhe loved her luſts! Iſa. 53. 11. Joh. 16. 22. Luke 7. ver. 44.

Thirdly. The Holy Ghoſt rejoyceth at the converſion of ſinners. As the ſprit may be grieved by men, ſo he may Eph. 5. 30.

be comforeted by men: and ſo he is by a converted ſinner.

1. *Reaſ.* Becauſe he is the Handy-work of the ſpirit, he is his creature, his curious piece. Grace hath a far greater excellency than gifts have. The Spirit gives gifts to natural men; but he gives grace to none but true converts. Every one of theſe may ſay as *David, I am fearfully and wonderfully made:* he is changed into the Image of the Lord, by the ſpirit.

Pſa. 139. 14.

2 Cor. 3. 8.

2. The Holy Ghoſt hath now another new houſe to reſide in. *Ye know the ſpirit*, ſaith Chriſt to his Diſciples, *for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be with you.*

John 14. 17.

Fourthly. The holy Angels rejoyce at the converſion of a ſinner: *There is joy in the preſence of the Angels of God, over one ſinner that repenteth.* The Angels ſhouted for joy, to ſee the Power and Wiſdom of God in the creation, they admired the works of Gods hands. Much more do they ſhout for joy at his new creature. The Angels were ſo far from envy that Chriſt ſhould take on him the nature of man, and not their nature, that they did moſt gloriouſly celebrate the thing: *Glory be to God in the higheſt, peace on earth, good will towards men.* And why ſhould Angels rejoyce at the converſion of a ſinner?

Luke 15. 10.

Job 38. 7.

Luke 2. 14.

Reaſ. Firſt, Becauſe their imployment for God is increaſed. Angels bleſs God for their imployment, and it is much of their imployment to be *miniſtring ſpirits to miniſter for them that ſhall be heirs of ſalvation*, Heb. 1. 14.

Pſal. 103. 20.

2. Becauſe every converted ſinner adds to their communion. *We are come to an innumarable company of Angels.* As the Devil is familiar with wicked men. We read of thoſe that had to do with *familiar ſpirits*, as *Saul*, and *Manaſſeh*, and many others: ſo, in ſome reſpects, even now, Angels are a Saints familiars, they have *charge over them*; and *pitch their tents round about them*; and *miniſter to them.* Jeſus Chriſt hath made Angels great friends to his people.

Heb. 12. 22.

Pſal. 91. 11.

Pſal. 34. 7.

Heb. 1. 14.

Fifthly. The Saints here rejoyce at the converſion of ſinners. You may well conceive, that *Paul* was extream glad at the con-

Converſion of *Oneſimus*. And to the Church at *Theſſalonica*, Phil. 1. 2.
ſaith he, *Ye are our glory and joy.* We may obſerve this alſo 1 Theſ. 2. 20.
in *David*, *Come ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you* Pſal. 34. 11.
the fear of the Lord. And then will I teach tranſgreſſors Pſal. 51. 13.
thy ways, and ſinners ſhall be converted unto thee. How glad
was *Barnabas*, when he ſaw the Grace of God in thoſe that
believed? Acts 11. 23.

Reaſ. And the reaſon of this is, becauſe this is a thing that not only Miniſters, but Saints look much after. There is not a godly man, but if he do his duty, and act like himſelf, but he much deſires the Converſion of Sinners. He would have others as well as himſelf, *to taſte how gracious the Lord is*—— *Brethren*, ſaith *Paul* to the *Romans*, *my hearts deſire* Rom. 10. 1.
and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they may be ſaved. And
to *Agrippa*, *I would to God, that not only thou, but all that* Acts 26. 29.
hear me this day, were both almoſt, and altogether ſuch as I am, except theſe bonds—— And this is that which every Saint prays for much, that the Kingdom of God may encreaſe and flouriſh, and this Chriſt hath taught us to do. Matth. 6. 10.

Queſt. But *Thirdly*, Wherein is this Joy at a Sinners Converſion declared?

Anſ. God declares it in his calling on Sinners to repent. *God now comands all men every where to repent.* And in his Acts 17. 30.
ready and affectionate receiving and embracing returning Sinners. *When the father ſaw his ſon coming afar off, he had compaſſion and ran, and fell on his neck and kiſſed him.* And God commends new converts to Saints to receive them, and deal tenderly with them; as he did *Saul* to *Ananias*. *Be-* Acts 9. 11.
hold, he prayeth, and he is a choſen Veſſel. And he commends
them to Angels to be tender and careful of them. *Angels* Pſal. 91. 11.
miniſtred to Chriſt after his temptations. And an *Angel from* Matth. 4. 11.
heaven ſtrengthned Chriſt in his Agony. And God appoints Luke 22. 43.
them to Miniſter to all thoſe who are the Heirs of Salvation. And Chriſt he delights to hear them pray; a work which they fall upon preſently upon their Converſion. *Behold, he prayeth*, ſaith Chriſt of *Saul*. *Let me hear thy voice, for ſweet* Acts 9. 11.
is thy voice. The ſtrong motions of new converts towards Cant. 2. 12.

God, and the pantings of their Souls after him, do much affect him. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*; this moved the bowels of God, *Jer.* 31. 18, 20.

Use 1. This informs us of the malignity of their minds; who are vext at the Conversion of Sinners. As the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were at those Publicans and Sinners that entred into the Kingdom of God; they murmured when they flocked after Christ to hear him. How full of wrath were the *Jews* a-
Acts 9. 29. gainst *Paul*, when he believed? They sought his life immediately upon it. Men of this temper are not of God, but of the Devil: God rejoyceth at the Conversion of Sinners, and the Devil is vexed at it; it is part of his torment; he was
2 Cor. 12 7. enraged at *Paul*, when a Convert, then he buffetted him,
1 Thess. 2 18. and hindred him again and again, in his work. And there are a Generation of men, that follow the Devil herein; they are vexed when a Sinner becomes a Saint; *They think it strange, that he runs not with them to the same excess of riot.*
1 Pet 4. 4. How did the Rulers twit that man that had been blind, and
John 9. 28. was become a Disciple of Jesus?

2. This informs us of what great esteem they are with God, whether Ministers or other Persons, who are instruments of the Conversion of Sinners. *He that winneth souls, is wise.*
Prov. 11. 30. *And they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as*
Dan. 12. 3. *the stars for ever and ever.* A man that puts himself upon this
Job 33. 23. work, God calls him *a messenger, one of a thousand.* He is
1 Cor. 3. 9. a *worker together with God*. *He that converteth a sinner, sa-*
James 5. 20. *veth a soul*; he is a Saviour. All this sheweth the high esteem that the Lord hath of Instruments in this excellent work. What then, are the Instruments of a Sinners Damnation? That *strengthen the hands of evil doers?* That *shut up the kingdom of*
Jer. 23. 14. *Heaven against men*? That *will neither enter* into the Kingdom
Matth. 23. 13. of Heaven *themselves, nor suffer them that are entering to go in?*
Jer. 17. 18. Doubtless, such will have double Damnation. *Their blood*
Ezek. 3. 18. *will I require at thine hand.* It will be thus with those that do not *warn* Sinners. And how much sorer will their Damnation be, that *harden* Sinners?

3. This informs us, what a grief and trouble impenitent
Psal. 95. 10. Sinners are to God: *Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation. It is a people that do err in their hearts. Where-*

fore,

fore, I ſware in my wrath, that they ſhould not enter into my reſt. Obſerve Gods Expoſtulation with thoſe *Jew*, that refuſed to return. *Why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* Why will ye be damned? And it is ſaid, That Jeſus *was angry and grieved at the blindneſs, and hardneſs of the hearts of the Jews.* And how did he weep over *Jeruſalem* for their wilfulneſs? Ez. 33. 11. Mark 3. 5. Luke 19 41.

And it is ſaid of ſome in *Iſaiah*, That they vexed Gods Holy Spirit. And in Chap. 43. God ſaith, they made him to ſerve with their ſins, and wearied him with their Iniquities. In ver. 22. He told them, that they had been weary of him; and here, that they had wearied him. So ſaith the Prophet, *It is a ſmall thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God alſo?* Iſa. 53. 10. Iſa. 43. 24. Iſa. 7. 13.

Oh, let me tell ſuch men, that it repenteth God that he hath made ſuch wilful, unperſwadable Creatures as you are. As when God ſaw the wickedneſs and wilfulneſs of the old World, it repented him that he had made man on the Earth, and it grieved him at his heart. O! wo to men, when God repents he hath made them, or done them good: For now, God is about to deſtroy them, and to take all that is good away from them. When God repented that he had made *Saul* King, he then rejected him from being King over *Iſrael.* Gen. 6. 5, 16. 1 Sam. 15. 26.

4. This ſerves for Exhortation to all Converts, to ſuch Sinners as are made Saints, and brought into a ſtate of Grace. Did God rejoyce in your Converſion? Oh fulfil you his Joy. Take heed you turn not his joy into ſorrow again. God is grieved at your follies, as well as at your miſeries. His people grieved him in the deſert, with their diſcontent at his Providences and unbelief of his promiſes. You grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by corrupt Communication one with another. You trouble God with your inconſtancy in that which is good, in the performance of your Duty he hath commanded you to himſelf, and to others. *O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? for your goodneſs is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it paſſeth away.* Phil. 2. 2. Pſal. 78. 40. Eph. 4. 30. Hoſ. 6. 4.

Oh! that God ſhould rejoyce in you at your Converſion, and you ſo often grieve and trouble him afterwards! Oh! let us endeavour to keep ſuch a frame of Spirit, and to walk ſo, as that he may call us, as he did *Sion, Hephzibah, my delight is in* Iſa. 62. 4.

in you. Thus much for the first general Doctrine from the words.

I now come to the second General Doctrine, from the same 22, and 23. Verse. *But the Father said to his servants, bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him,* &c. In the former verse, it is said, The Son said to his Father, *I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* But saith the Father to his Servants, *Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him.* Whence we may observe,

Doct. That God deals not with humbled Sinners, according to their confessed sinfulness and unworthiness; but after his free-Grace. The Father doth not upbraid his Son with his Debaucheries abroad, he doth not threaten him with Justice for them; but he takes care to comfort and encourage him: doth by him, as Jesus did by *Mary Magdalen* at her repen-
Luke 7. 37. tance: He tells her not, what a noted Sinner she had been, and what a loud Woman; but he deals gently with her, as
Vers. 48, 50. with a bruised reed: *Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace.* Indeed when Sinners continue wilful after the repeated offers
Matth. 11. 20. of Grace, then he upbraids them, as he did those Cities where he wrought many Miracles, and often preached, and yet they received him not, nor believed, nor repented. But when Sinners repent and humble themselves, as this Prodigal Son did, then he passeth by the mention of their former evil courses, and encourageth them in their good beginnings.
Ez. 18. 22. *All his transgressions shall not be mentioned to him.*

Reas. And the reason why God carries it thus to returning Sinners, is *First*, Because God will commend his free-Grace to men, in their Calling and Conversion, as well as in their Election. As God neither looks at good or evil in men, when he chuseth them: so also their Calling is of free-Grace: *The*
Rom. 9. 11. *children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works but of him that calleth.* Gods love to Sinners is indepen-
Deut. 7. dent, as his love to *Israel* was: He loveth them, because he will love them. His εὐδοκία, his Good-will, is the ground of all the good he doth them. Observe what the Apostle

Paul

Paul ſaith, *We our ſelves were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, ſerving diverſe luſts ond pleaſures. But after the kindneſs and love of God, our Saviour, towards man, appeared, not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his mercy, he ſaved us.* Mercy is Gods rule in dealing with repenting Sinners, and not their merit. He anſwers them not according to their former follies, but he acts his own rich Grace towards them, *in all wiſdom and prudence.* Tit. 3. 4, 5. Eph. 1. 7.

Secondly, God carries it ſo tenderly towards confeſſing and returning Sinners, becauſe he would not diſcourage them. He knows they have ſuffered more or leſs, under the Spirit of Bondage; and therefore ſaith, as *Paul* to the *Corinthians*, of the dejected Inceſtuous Perſon; ſufficient to ſuch a man is the ſorrow and heart-breaking he hath had already, and now let him be comforted, *leſt perhaps he ſhould be ſwallowed up of over-much ſorrow.* 2 Cor. 2. 6. Matth 12. 20.

Chriſt will not *break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking flax.* If he ſhould deal roughly with ſelf-abaſing, and ſelf judging Sinners; he knows their little Grace would not be able to maſter their Temptations. A little Coal that hath but a few ſparks of fire in it, if it be hard blown, it is ſoon put out, but if gently dealt with, it will encreaſe at length to a flame. So a little Grace, that is but as a grain of Muſtard; if it be diſcouraged, it will be cruſhed; but if gently uſed, it will encreaſe and grow to a Tree.

Uſe. This is for encouragement to ſuch as are under the pangs of the new Birth; whilſt they are bewailing their paſt ſins, and judging themſelves, God is taking care for their comfort and encouragement. As he did for *Jeruſalem. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſaith the Lord; ſpeak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem, and cry unto her, that her iniquity is pardoned:* do not Whiſper it, but make Proclamation of it. Thus when the Prodigal was judging himſelf for his paſt ſinful life; *I am no more worthy to be called thy ſon*: His Father calls upon his Servants to prepare comfort for him. God humbles himſelf to the weakneſs of a repenting Sinner, as a Mother doth to her weak Child; he thinks not much of it to be patient, and to be ſilent, as to their former evil ways. God deals with repenting and ſelf-bemoaning Sinners, according to their Iſa. 40. 1, 2. Pſal. 113. 4.

ſtate,

ſtate, and his own nature: they are weak and tender branches, and he handles them gently; and he hath provided ſuch a Chriſt for ſuch tender hearts, who dealt with young Diſciples *as they were able to bear.* God hath appointed Chriſt, *To ſeek that which is loſt, and to fetch again that which was driven away; and to bind up and ſtrengthen that which was broken and ſick, to binde up the broken hearted; to gather the lambs in his arms, and to carry them in his boſome; and to guide thoſe that are with young.*

Mark 4. 33. Ezc. 34. 16. Luke 19. 10. Luc. 4. 18. Iſa. 40. 11.

Some tutors have not patience to deal with dull ſcholars, nor power to inſtill learning into them. But God hath both theſe; he hath patience ſuitable to their weakneſs, and power over their incapacity: *The ear of the deaf ſhall hear, and the tongue of the dumb ſhall ſing.* If a man meet with a crooked piece of wood in his work, he is fain to throw it by: But God and Chriſt can make *crooked ways ſtrait.* Thoſe poor ſouls that ſet their faces towards heaven notwithſtanding they have hard thoughts of themſelves, and that very juſtly, as the returning prodigal had; yet God hath better thoughts of them; and though they be dull of hearing, yet Chriſt encourageth them to learn of him; he is a meek and lowly teacher. *Moſes* came roughly, and ſo did *John*; but Chriſt comes to treat humbled ſinners gently and tenderly: *He will not break the bruſed reed.* He will not put new wine into old bottles.

Iſa. 35. 8. ver. 5, 6. Iſa. 40. 4. Matth 11. 29. Matt 12 20. Matth. 9. 17.

Secondly. The Doctrine conduceth to holineſs, as well as comfort and encouragement; and that is as welcome to a ſeriouſly humbled ſinner, as the other. To ſin that grace may abound, or becauſe grace doth abound, is a ſign of the want of grace, and of the ſinfulneſs of ſin. All acts of grace ſhould be matter of wonder to a ſinner, and will be to an humbled converted ſinner: *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?* And the ſame grace makes him to loath himſelf for his ſins, *Ezek.* 36. 31. To be free to ſin, becauſe of Gods free grace, is a mortal ſign: Gods mercy and grace are holy things, like himſelf; and their proper fruit is holineſs. *The grace of God that hath appeared to us, teacheth us, that denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world. I beſeech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye preſent your bodies a living ſacrifice to God, holy, acceptable*

Rom. 6. 1. Mic. 6. 18. Tit. 2. 11. Rom. 1. 12.

table. Having therefore thoſe promiſes, let us cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1. They are Devils, and ſuch as the Devil worketh effectually in, who abuſe the grace of God, to ſin againſt him. This was the ſin of the Angels that fell, and this was the fall of man.

So much for the general Obſervations from the 22*d.* and 23*d.* Verſes.

CHAP. XXIV.

Sheweth, to whoſe care God recommends his people. Particularly, from the firſt Clauſe of the 22*d. Verſe*, And the Father ſaid unto his ſervatns ——. *As alſo, the Nakedneſs and Uncleanneſs of every man by nature: From the next following*, Bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him.

I Come now to the Doctrines ariſing from the ſeveral clauſes of the words.

And the father ſaid unto his ſervants, Who are theſe Servants?

I Anſwer. All creatures are Gods Servants, *Pſal.* 119. 91. *All are thy ſervants.* Gods Preſcience and Providence gives Law to all things.

But more eſpecially, thoſe that God makes uſe of in a ſinners converſion, are here intended.

As 1*ſt.* Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, he is the ſervant of God in this point. *Behold, my ſervant, whom I uphold, I have put my ſpirit in him, and he ſhall bring forth judgement to the gentiles*, Iſa. 42. 1. that, is in their calling and converſion. And Angels are Gods ſervants herein: they were imployed in celebrating the Meſſias his coming into the world to ſeek and to ſave that

which was loſt, *Luke* 2. 14. And the Miniſters of the Goſpel are Gods ſervants herein: to them is *committed the miniſtry of reconciliation*: not onely to invite ſinners to be reconciled to God; but alſo, to let thoſe know it, who have obtained this grace or bleſſedneſs. *I write unto you, little children, becauſe your ſins are forgiven you for his name ſake.*

2 Cor. 5. 18. 19.

1 John 2. 12.

Yea, and Saints are Gods ſervants herein. How ſervicable were the Diſciples to *Paul* upon his converſion? *Acts* 9. 25. they conveyed him from the rage of the *Jews*; at *Damaſcus*, they let him down by the wall: which was a high piece of ſervice, and a great venture the Diſciples ran in it. For Walls with the *Heathens*, were hallowed things, as Sanctuaries were in the Law, and it was a capital crime to go over them: yet the Diſciples ventured themſelves for *Paul*.

The Doctrine therefore is this.

Doct. That God commends his converts to the tender care of Angels and Saints, and eſpecially of Jeſus Chriſt and his Miniſters. Chriſt commended his Mother, when he was upon the croſs, to the care of the beloved Diſciple: John 19. 27. *Behold thy mother*, ſaith Chriſt to him; *and from that time that Diſciple took her to his own home.* And thus doth God take care of every man at his converſion. He ſaith to Chriſt, behold the *travel of thy ſoul.* He ſaith to the Angels, behold here is *your charge.* And he ſaith to Goſpel-Miniſters, here is *your bowels*; and, here is *your glory and joy.* And to the ſaints, here is your fellow Citizen.

Iſa. 53. 10. Heb. 1. 14. Phil. 12. Theſ. 2. 20. Ephe. 2. 19.

1. God commends his converts to the tender care of Chriſt, *Thine they were*, ſaith Jeſus to his Father, *and thou gaveſt them me.* For what? To ſave them from the *Condemnation* of ſin; and from the *Power* of ſin; and to keep them from the power and hurt of the Devil. *Adam* was not thus kept, the Devil did hurt him. And to ſecure them from the accuſations of the Devil: *The accuſer of the brethren is caſt down.* And to keep them from the poyſon of Satans temptations, *Satan hath deſired to winnow you, but I have prayed, that thy faith fail not.* And to deliver them from the fear of death, from the torment of that fear. To be tender of them in their infancy in grace, *My*

John 17. 9. Rom. 8. 1. ver. 2. Gal. 3. Rev. 12. 11. Luc. 22. 32. Heb. 2. 14, 15. Matth. 12. 18.

ſervants

ſervant whom I have choſen, that is Jeſus Chriſt, *a bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoaking flax ſhall he not quench.* And to preſerve them from apoſtacy: John 17. 12. *Whilſt I was in the world, I kept them*, that they did not fall as *Judas* did.

2. God commits his converts to the tender care of Angels. The Angels have a ſpecial care over Saints, in their infancy in Grace; becauſe Satan is full of envy and wrath againſt them. As it is ſaid of the church, *The dragon was ready to devour the child ſo ſoon as it was born.* Rev. 12. 4. But what do the Angels do for them? Nay, what do they not, that is in their commiſſion? They remove impediments betwixt them and Chriſt, as they *rolled away the ſtone from the Sepulcher.* Matth 28. ver. 6. 7. They bad the holy Women go tell his Diſciples, that he was riſen. The Holy Angels puts good motions into the minds of good men, as evil Angels do evil motions into wicked mens minds; as into *Ahab*, and *Judas*, and *Ananias*, yea, and into godly men ſometimes: as he *provoked David to number the people.* Good Angels have their ſpecial charge over Gods little ones. *Deſpiſe not one of theſe little ones*; little in faith, in grace: *for their Angels do always behold the face of my father in heaven.* 1 Chro. 21. 1. Matth. 18. 10. The meaneſt godly man hath this priviledge, the Holy Angels are his Angels; they were *Lazarus*'s Angels. The Angels rejoyce at mens converſion: they pitch their Tents about them, whilſt they live here. Luke 16. 22. *Pſal.* 34. 7. attend their ſpirits to Heaven, when they die, *Luke* 16. and gather their bodies from amongſt the wicked, when Chriſt comes again. *Matth.* 24. 31. Saints have a kind of communion with Holy Angels: and therefore are ſaid to be come, *To an innumerable company of Angels*, Heb. 12. 22.

Objection. But we ſee not the Angels imployed for our good.

Anſwer. Yet we muſt believe they are, becauſe the Scriptures tells us ſo. Tho their attendance be not ſo viſible as it hath been formerly, yet it is as real. And beſides, you may as well ſay, that the Devil doth not tempt you to evil, becauſe you ſee him not, as that the Angels do not comfort you, and put you on to that which is good, and protect you from evil, becauſe you ſee them not.

3. God commends his converts to the tender care of the Miniſters of Chriſt; and to them, next to Chriſt himſelf. What Chriſt ſaid to *Peter*, he ſaith to all his Miniſters, *Feed my Lambs.* The Miniſters of Chriſt are wooers for him, *we pray you in Chriſts ſtead.* And when poor ſinners come in to Chriſt, they are the Paranymphs, the friends, both of the Bridegroom and the Bride.

John 21. 15.
2 Cor. 5. 20.
John 3. 29.

A Miniſters work is, to convert ſinners, and to perfect Saints. *He gave gifts to men, for the perfecting of the Saints.* When men are begotten to Chriſt, it is Satans firſt deſign to draw them off from the Miniſtry, that they may be carried to and fro in their Religion, till like children, they make it but a bawble to play with, and at laſt throw it away.

Ephe. 4. 12.

Some new converts are not wholly free from the ſpirit of bondage. And Miniſters muſt take heed of ſpeaking to the grief of theſe, whom God hath wounded, as *Davids* expreſſion is. We muſt not turn the Cart-Wheel over Cummin; a little Wand is fitter to do this. It is the office of a Miniſter of Chriſt to open the bowels of Chriſt and of his Goſpel, to new converts, that have not the Lightning and Thunder of the Law as yet fully out of their conſcience. He muſt ſhew ſuch the good will of Chriſt towards them, that *he will not leave them comfortleſs: That he will not break the bruiſed reed.*

Pſal. 69. 26.
Iſa. 28. 27.
John 14.
Matth. 12. 20.

See the tenderneſs of *Paul* over converted *Oneſimus*: *Receive him, as my own bowels*: receive him now above a *Servant*, as a *Brother beloved in the Lord.* And ſo over the *Corinthians*, after they had been made ſad by him for their miſcarriages: now, he was as much for their comfort; *we were comforted in your comfort.* And his tender care for the converted *Romans*, *I have longed to ſee you, that I might eſtabliſh you.* And God hath charged all his Miniſters with the ſame tender care.

Phil. 16.
2 Cor. 7. 13.
Rom. 1. 11.

4. God commends every converted ſinnner in his infancy in grace, to the tender care of Saints: We exhort you, Brethren, as to other things, ſo to this, See that ye *comfort the feeble minded, and ſupport the weak.* And ſo to the *Romans*: *Such as are weak in the faith, receive; but not to doubtful diſputations.*

1 Theſſ. 5. 14.
Rom. 14. 1.

Uſe

Use Firſt. this is encouragement to new converts; you ſee what care God takes of you. God ſees the Devil hates you, and envies you, and will do you miſchief if he can, becauſe he is *caſt out of* you. And that the world hates you, *becauſe you are not of* it. It may be friends, tho they do not hate you, yet they may with draw much of their love from you, as the *Jews* did from *Paul*, and as the friends of ſome that followed Chriſt, which made him ſay, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.* And it may be your own Conſciences are not thorowly ſetled, after the terrors and ſhakings which you felt in your Converſion. But againſt all this, you may ſee the tenderneſs of God over you, that he hath committed you to the tender care of Saints, and Miniſters, and Angels, and of Chriſt himſelf.

Acts 26. 18. John 15. 19. Acts 9. Matth. 10. 37.

Secondly, This conduceth to the comfort of elder Chriſtians. For whom the Lord loveth, *he loveth to the end.* His tender care of you, that began at your Converſion, will laſt till your Perfection: *Being confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it*, or will finiſh it, *to the day of Jeſus Chriſt.* Parents are commonly fond of their Children when they are young; but when they are grown up, they let them ſhift for themſelves. But God is as fond of Saints, to ſpeak with reverence, when they are old Saints, as when they were young. You may apply that in *Iſaiah* to your ſelves: *Even to your old age, I am he*; the ſame I ever was to you, *Even to hoar hairs will I carry you.* We carry Children only when they are young; but God will carry his in their old Age.

John 13. 1. Phil. 1. 6. Iſa. 46. 4.

O, it is a bleſſed thing to be in a ſtate of Grace; you are in the beginning of this bleſſedneſs now; but *your latter end ſhall be better then your beginning*; as it is ſaid of *Job*. So much for the firſt Clauſe, *And the Father ſaid unto his ſervants.*

I now proceed to the next, *Bring forth the beſt Robe, and put it on him.* Here the Father firſt Cloathes his Son, and then feaſts him. As *Joſeph* changed his Raiment, before he went in to *Pharoah*. And men came not to the Marriage-feaſt without a Wedding-garment. So the Father of the Prodigal, cloaths

Gen. 42. Matthew 22.

cloathes him ſutably, to ſit with him at his Table; as Chriſt
Luke 22. 30. ſaid to his Diſciples, *That ye may eat and drink at my table.* This ſuppoſeth, that the Prodigal was in an ill Habit at his coming home, he had but poor Cloaths. Whence we have this Doctrine:

Doct. That all men in their Natural condition are unclean, and naked Creatures. Our firſt Parents, ſo ſoon as they loſt
Gen. 3. 7. their Innocency, were naked; *they ſaw they were ſo.* Sin
Exod. 32. 25. makes men naked; ſo *Iſraels* ſin in the Golden Calf made them *naked.* Joſhua's *filthy Garments* ſignified, how naked and polluted ſin makes a man. The nakedneſs and pollution of every man in his natural ſtate, is evidently ſet out by that
Ez. 16. 3. metaphorical Child, *Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite*, Unclean Nations. Was not *Abraham* their Father, and *Sarah* their Mother? Yes, but the Holy Ghoſt ſpeaks as Chriſt did to the *Jews*, *Ye are of your father the De-*
John 8. 44. *vil, becauſe ye do his luſts.* So the Prophet tells this polluted degenerated People, That *their father was an Amorite, and their mother an Hittite*: They were more like the Children of theſe Nations, than the Children of *Abraham* and *Sarah.* Then the Prophet goes on, *Thou waſt not ſwadled at all*, but left open and naked as thou waſt born, *and no eye pitied thee*;
Luke 10. therefore in a worſe condition than that wounded man that was ſtripped of his Raiment by Thieves. For tho neither the Prieſt nor the Levite pitied him, yet the *Samaritan* did. And then *thou waſt caſt out into the open field, to the loathing of thy perſon*: As the Angels that ſinned, were caſt out of Heaven, and man out of Paradice: So waſt thou caſt out of the Cradle and Houſe, not into the Streets, but into the open Field, into the wide World; as loathed of God, a loathſom Object
Eph. 2. 12. in his ſight; and therefore, as *without God in the World.* All theſe expreſſions are from known uſes and cuſtomes, either amongſt the *Jews* or *Gentiles*, as all Allegorical Scriptures are. And they all have their ſpiritual ſenſe and meaning, holding forth the nakedneſs and filthineſs of every man in his natural ſtate.

The firſt man defiled humane Nature, and ever ſince men
Pſal. 14. 3. by nature *are altogether become filthy*, or putrid, in the *Hebrew* it is *ſtinking.* The Devil is a ſoul unclean Spirit, and

and natural men his children, are foul unclean Creatures. Chriſt told the *Laodiceans*, that they were *naked*. And ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *Man that is in honour, and underſtandeth not, is like the beaſts that periſh.* Rev. 3. 17. Pſal. 49.

Uſe 1. *Firſt*, This informs us of the blindneſs of men in their natural ſtate; that they are naked, loathſom Creatures, and yet ſee it not: as Chriſt ſaid to the Angel of the Church of *Laodicea*, *Thou knoweſt not that thou art naked*; in a worſe condition than *Adam* and *Eve*, who knew that they were naked. There are many who are godly in their own eyes, and in the eyes of others too, and yet in Gods, an abomination. *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not waſhed from their filthineſs.* Natural men are like men that dream; ſuch as the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſpeaks of, and the Apoſtle *Jude*; they dream they are ſuch, as they find they are not, when the Eye of Conſcience is opened and awakened. Rev. 3. 17. Gen. 3. 7. Pr. 30. 12.

2. If they do ſee and know their nakedneſs, yet they are not aſhamed; they are impudent Creatures; as God called the *Jews*, *All the houſe of Iſrael are impudent and hard hearted: Thou hadſt a whores forehead, thou refuſedſt to be aſhamed*; ſaith the Lord to the ſame People. So in the Prophet *Jeremiah*, *Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh.* The Apoſtle ſaith of ſuch men, *They glory in their ſhame*; they boaſt of their baſe luſts. Ez. 3. 7. Jer. 3. 3. Jer. 6. 15. Phil. 3. 19.

3. When natural men ſee their nakedneſs, and are aſhamed of it (as it is ſaid, *The people were naked to their ſhame.*) Yet then they do, as *Adam* and *Eve* did, ſew Fig-leaves together to make them Aprons. Shame is the Lacky that waits upon ſin, and conſtrains the Conſcience to bluſh, when the face doth not; and now man ſhifts and ſhirks for himſelf; he ſeeks to cover his nakedneſs and ſhame with Fig-leaves. The Fig-leaves were curſed by Chriſt, and ſo are all the baſe ſhifts of a ſinner under a curſe. Exod. 32. 25. Matth. 21. 19.

Uſe 2. *Secondly*, The point ſerves to Exhortation to men, To get the pollution of their own blood waſhed off, and their ſhame and nakedneſs covered. Nothing in the World will

do

do this, but the Blood of Jesus; Blood must be done away with blood, your polluted blood, with Christs precious blood; both the guilt, and the stain of it: *Without blood there is no remission:* *And the blood of Jesus Christ his son, cleanseth us from all sin.*

1 Pet. 1. 19. Heb 9. 22. 1 John 1. 7.

CHAP. XXV.

Sheweth, The Justification, Honour and Liberty, which God bestows upon Believers. From the last foregoing, and next following Clauses of the 22. Verse.

Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his hand, and Shooes on his feet.

AND first, what is the best Robe? It must needs intimate the righteousness of Christ imputed to a repenting Sinner: there is no cloathing so good as this. Whence we have this Doctrine,

Doct. That God the Father doth put the righteousness of Christ his Son upon true Converts. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,* saith the Apostle. *And as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.* Christ is said to be a Believers righteousness: *Who of God is made unto us righteousness. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,* saith the Prophet. No covering sufficient for a sinners nakedness, but the righteousness of Christ, which is, his holy Nature, and his Obedience, both active and passive. These are his *skirts* which he *casts over our nakedness,* that we might be *made the righteousness of God in him.* No righteousness but this, hath any place in a Sinners Justification. When a Sinner comes to account with God, he can never plead his own Righteousness or Holiness. He cannor boast, Lord I have Grace enough to justifie me; but must pray, *Lord enter not into judgment with me, for in thy sight can no flesh living be justified.* *All our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags.* We must say

Rom. 13. 14. Gal. 3. 27. 1 Cor. 1. 30. Isaiah 61. 21. Hebrew 7. 26. Ezra 16. 8. 2 Cor. 5. 21. Psalm 143 2. Isaiah 64 6.

ſay in this caſe, as the men of *Bethſhemeſh* ſaid, *Who is able to ſtand before this holy God?* and as *Job*, *If I ſay I will waſh me*, that is, ſo as to leave no ſpot in me, *mine own clothes would abhor me.* No works of Righteouſneſs which we have done, are commenſurate and adequate no payment to the Juſtice of God. Alas we halt, as *Jacob*, in our beſt deeds, to our dying day. The Righteouſneſs of Chriſt which God puts upon a Believer, gives a ſweet ſavour to him, as *Eſau*'s Garments did to *Jacob*. In the point of juſtification, we muſt do as they that fled from the purſuer of Blood; they fled for their Lives to the Altar, or City of Refuge: ſo there is no way to eſcape the Juſtice of God, and the curſe of the Law, but by flying to the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt. Shall *Adams* ſin, ſaith *Bernard*, be imputed to me, and ſhall not Chriſts Righteouſneſs? The worth of man is out of himſelf. *Thou waſt beautiful, through my comelineſs put upon thee.* Scripture Language ſpeaks loud and plain in this caſe: *Who is made of God unto us righteouſneſs. That we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him. He ſhall be called the Lord our righteouſneſs. As by the diſobedience of one, many were made ſinners; ſo by the obedience of one, ſhall many be made righteous.*

1 Sam. 6. 20. Job 9. 32. Gen. 32. 31. Gen. 27. 27. Ezec. 16. 14. 2 Cor. 2. 30. 2 Cor. 5. 22. Jer. 23. 6. Iſa. 45. 24. Rom. 5 19.

Oh the tender care of God in providing ſufficient and rich clothing for a poor naked repenting ſinner! When God had promiſed Chriſt to our firſt Parents, then he made them clothes. And what did he make them of? It is ſaid, he made them of skins; that is, of the skins of beaſts offered in Sacrifice; which God taught them betime; as we ſee in *Abels* offering, which was a Type of Chriſt.

Gen 3. 22. Gen. 4. 4. Heb. 10 5, 10

And beſides, Chriſts Imputed Righteouſneſs, God alſo clothes a Believer with the Grace of Chriſt, or righteouſneſs from Chriſt inherent in him. The Scripture joins theſe together, in the ſame ſubject: Chriſt is *made of God unto us righteouſneſs and ſanctification.* The Graces of Gods Spirit are clothing that God puts on Believers: *Be clothed with humility.* And the Apoſtle compares a meek and quiet Spirit, to a cloathing ornament. So that as Chriſts Righteouſneſs imputed, is the convertes Robe; ſo his Righteouſneſs communicated, may be ſaid to be the lining of the Robe.

1 Cor. 1. 30. 1 Pet. 5. 5. 1 Pet. 3. 4.

It follows, *put a ring on his hand.* Besides a necessary garment, the Father gives him that which is more especially for honour and ornament; which shews, that the Grace of God to a returned sinner, doth abound, and superabound. *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Wherein he hath abounded towards us, according to the riches of his grace. According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* As it is said of *Araunah*; *he gave to David as a king:* So the Lord gives to converted sinners as a God, gifts like himself; like a Great and Gracious God. *Put a ring on his hand*: This was the honouring part of his Entertainment.

Rom. 5. 20. Eph. 1. 7, 8. 2 Pet. 1. 3. 2 Sam. 24. 23.

There are two special uses of a Ring mentioned in Scripture: It was used as a piece of Honour, and as a Seal. For the first, we read how *Pharaoh* took off his Ring from his hand, and put it upon *Josephs* hand, and made him ride in the second Chariot which he had. And so the King took off his Ring and gave it to *Mordicai*, when he honoured him. For the latter we also read that *Haman* sealed the writing with the Kings Ring.

Gen. 41. 42. Esther 8. 2. Esther 3. 12.

Doct. Whence we learn, That God puts Honour upon a Believer. It may be said of such a man, This is the man which the King will honour.

1. God doth him the Honour, to take him nigh to himself; to be his friend, as he called *Abraham*; and as he did *Moses*, of whom it is said, *God spake with him mouth to mouth, as a man speaks with his friend.*

Isa. 41. 8.

He leans on Gods Bosome: *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*; and not only nigh him as a friend, but as a Son: *This my son*; a Convert is high born, Born of God. *Come out from amongst them, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* And such Honour have all his Saints.

Psalm 25. 14. 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18. Rev. 1. 5, 6.

2. God Honours Converts in taking them into the Royal order of Kings and Priests: *who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father.* Not of this world: *My kingdom is not of this world*, saith Christ to *Pilate*: Neither is theirs. Yet they often command a veneration from it: *Thou art a mighty prince amongst us*, say the Children of *Heth* to *Abraham*. Or, as the Hebrew, a Prince of God. Their Kingdom at present

John 18. 36. Gen. 23. 6.

is

is more an object of Faith, than of sight. A believer hath a Princely Power, he hath power with God. And as God makes him a King, so also a Priest, of a *Royal Priesthood*; after a higher and better order than *Aarons*; after the order of Jesus Christ. Christ was King and Priest, and so is he. Now Priests were to offer Sacrifice, and to make intercession, and so doth he. And the Sacrifice he offers, is not like those under the Law, the Flesh of Bulls and Goats; but as Christ offered up himself to God, so a Believer offers up himself as a Living Sacrifice, as a sweet savour to God by Christ. And he refresheth God, as it is said of the fruit of the vine, which was offered in Sacrifice.

2 Cor. 5. 7. Psalm 112. 2. Gen. 32. 28. 1 Peter 2. 9. Rom. 12. 1. 2 Cor. 8. 5. Rev. 8. 4. Judg. 9. 13.

And he makes intercession; he Prayeth with the same Spirit that Christ prayed with? *God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, teaching us to cry Abba Father.* The Spirit of Christ Prays in him, and helpeth his infirmities in Prayer; and so his Prayers have power with God, as *Jacobs* had, and as Christs have: *I know thou heareſt me always.* And therefore Christ delights to hear him Pray: *Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet.*

Gen. 4. 6. Rom. 8. 26. Gen. 32. John 11. 42 Cant. 2. 14.

2. A Ring was used as a Seal. The writing was *sealed with the Kings ring.* A convert is one Sealed, *In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise.* Christ was sealed by God the Father; And so are his, they are entered amongst Gods sealed ones. Now amongst other uses of a Seal, there are these, To assure, and to distinguish.

Esth. 3. 13. Eph. 2. 13. John 6. 27. Rev. 73. 4.

1. The Spirit makes a believer sure to God; *The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knows them that are his.* And the spirit makes God sure to him: the spirit is his *witness*, and makes him clear in the things of God: The evidence of the Spirit is to him instead of Miracles. Yea, it doth more than Miracles: they gave only assurance of Christ and his Gospel, that they came from God with the offers of salvation: but the spirit gives assurance of our saving state in Grace, and assurance of glory to come.

2 Tim. 2. 19. Rom. 8 16. 1 Cor. 2, 12.

2. God by his Seal distinguisheth him from the world; as Christ did his Disciples: *Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen*

John 15. 19.

chosen you out of the world. God sets his own Image, the Impression of his own likeness on a good man; as the Seal doth on the Wax: he is made *partaker of the divine nature*; *renewed to the likeness of God.*

2 Pet. 1. 4. Col. 3. 10. Eph. 4. 24.

Thirdly, It follows, *put shooes on his feet*; that he may be prepared for stony and thorny ways in this world; and that his feet also may be adorned, and his foot-steps clean.

It may also signify, that the Prodigal was now at liberty. To be bare-foot, was a sign of Captivity and slavery. The Prophet walked bare-footed, in sign of the *Jews* Captivity. The Prodigal had been a slave in his far Countrey, the Citizen to whom he joined himself, set him to feed his Swine. But now he is come home, he is a free-man: *The Son is free.* When the Children of *Israel* were to go out of *Egypt*, the House of bondage, they were to put on their shooes. So when a sinner is converted, he is delivered from the House of Bondage, *into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.* And it may signify that a Convert is shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; that is, a courageous and undaunted spirit in the ways of of God, a prepared and fixed heart. When a sinner becomes a Saint, the world is against him, and the Devil is against him, and he is like to meet with the hatred of both: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Now what saith the Apostle in this case? God hath not given us *the spirit of fear*, but the spirit of *Power*, and the spirit of *Love*, Love that casteth out that fear which *hath torment in it*; and the spirit *of a sound mind.* It was part of *Ashurs* Blessing, *Thy shooes shall be iron and brass*, to tread upon thy enemies. So Jesus Christ was said to have *feet like fine brass*, to note his Power, in treading down his enemies. And his Disciples have the same given to them also.

Isa. 20. 3. John 8. Exodus 12. 11. Rom. 8. 22. Eph. 6. 15. Psal. 112. 6. 2 Tim. 2. 12. 2 Tim. 1. 7. Deut. 33. 25. Rev. 1. 11.

USE. Now as the Sun, Moon, and Stars, have a double Use, Illumination, and Influence: So have these Doctrines.

1. They Communicate Divine Light to our minds: they discover the mysteries of Gospel Grace, the wonderful love of God, in Christ, to poor sinners, especially in their Conversion. *Behold and wonder.*

2. These

2. Theſe things may have influence upon our hearts and affections, and ſo conduce much to our Holineſs: for if theſe things be ſo, and we have experience of them, *What manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs?* Our lives ſhould be more excellent than the lives of others: O let not Chriſt have cauſe to ſay to you, as to them in Matth. 5. 47. *What do you more than others?* And as you ſhould do ſuch things as others do not, nor can do; ſo you ſhould not do ſuch things as others do. *Tho Iſrael play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend.* Remember *Joſeph, how ſhould I do this wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* And *Nehemiah, ſhall ſuch a man as I flie?* All a Chriſtians Priviledges ſhould be preſſing arguments to more and more Holineſs. And the precious promiſes you are under, ſhould convey more of the Divine Nature to you. You ſhould walk as Princes in the Land; be of a choice Spirit, as *Caleb* was. Let all you converſe with, ſee that you are departed from the World to God; and that of a truth God is in you. And ſo much for this verſe.

Acts 13. 42. 2 Pet. 3. 11. Hoſ. 4. 15. Gen. 39. 9. Nehe. 6. 11. 2 Cor. 7. 1. 2 Pet. 1. 4. Num. 14. 22.

CHAP. XXVI.

Diſcourſeth of the peace and comfort which God puts into the hearts of ſincere penitents. From the 23. verſe:

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.

THIS verſe continues the tranſaction betwixt God and a Penitent ſinner. Having attired him both with what was neceſſary, and ornamental; he now feaſts him with excellent Food.

The caſe is extremely altered with the Prodigal; in the far Countrey, he fed ſwine, and fed with them, and glad that he could do it. But at his return to his Fathers Houſe, the Fatted

ted Calf must be killed and dressed for him: and all things suitable to it.

The Fatted Calf was Angels food: *Abraham* prepared such a Calf to feast and refresh the Angels that appeared to him from the Lord. Manna was called *Angels food*; not because Angels did eat it; but because God used Angels in preparing it for his People. But the Angels did eat of the Fatted Calf that *Abraham* prepared for them; or, which was all one, they seemed to do it, as accepting what *Abraham* intended for the best. A Calf was one of the Sacrifices in the Law; and used not only in sin-offerings, but in thanksgiving Offerings, which were Holy Feasts. *So will we render to thee the Calves of our lips.* An allusion to the Sacrificing of this Creature. And in both, it was a figure of Christ. And then it follows: *Let us eat and be merry*; this is proper to a Feast; *Go your way and eat the fat, and drink the sweet; neither be sorry, neither be ye grieved; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.* From the spiritual meaning of which, we have this Doctrine.

Gen. 18. 7.
Psalm 78. 25.
Eph. 1. 21.
Lev. 9. 2.
Hos. 14. 2.
Nehe. 8, 10.

Doct. That God gives a true penitent, strong consolation. He gives him dainties to live upon: God feasteth him, and he feasts and rejoyceth with God: *Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* Now is a time that the Soul is fed with exceedings. A sincere convert doth eat and drink with God in his Kingdom; as Christ told his Disciples they should do; this is usually a Converts entertainment when he first returns to God; it may be, afterwards he is kept to a set diet. The fatted Calf is not killed every day; as the Lords Table is not Meat for every day, but it is an extraordinary feast; the Eucharist, that is, a thanksgiving Feast: Tho at some seasons in the primitive times, it was used thrice a week.

Luke 22. 30.

But why doth God give such great entertainment to sinners at their first conversion?

First, Because it is the celebration of their new Birth. Birthdays are rejoycing days; the Angels Rejoyced at the Birth of Christ. And God and Angels rejoyce at the new Birth of a Convert, and rejoyce with him.

Luke 2. 13.

If

If a travelling woman hath ſuch great Joy *that a man is born into the world*; oh what are the mutual joys that are betwixt God and a Convert, that a new man is born, that a ſinner is born again? This is ſignified in that Promiſe and Prophecy of Goſpel-Days; *In this mountain ſhall the Lord of hoſts make unto all people, Jews* and *Gentiles*, that believe in Chriſt, *a feaſt of fat things, a feaſt of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.* John 16. 21. Iſa. 25. 6.

All theſe metaphorical expreſſions ſet forth the ſpiritual delicates wherewith the Lord entertains Converts under the Goſpel.

2. Becauſe the converſion of ſinners, eſpecially ſuch as are ſet forth by this Prodigal, requires it: they paſs thorow great ſtraits, and ſharp pangs in their New-Birth. This Prodigal was ready to periſh: *I periſh with hunger.* 2 Reaſon. Ver. 17.

The Spirit of Bondage poſſeſſeth them; their conſciences feel the curſe of the Law: *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things that are writtent in the book of the law to do them.* Gal. 3. 10. The Law hath no pity on a ſinner; It repreſents to a ſinners conſcience the ſecond Death, as well as the firſt. And therefore upon his repentance, there is need of thoſe *times of refreſhment from the preſence of the Lord.* Acts 3. 19. We read how thoſe Converts in the Acts, were pricked at heart. And oh the bitterneſs of Soul that was in *Mary Magdalen* for a time at her Converſion! ſhe needed a time of refreſhing; and therefore Jeſus bad her *Go in peace, her ſins were forgiven.* Chriſt is put in office *to heal the broken in heart, and to ſet at liberty the captives.* Luke 7. 48. Luke 4. 18.

A ſinner, in the way of his converſion, is in Bondage, as *Iſhmels* children are ſaid to be. Now when converſion is wrought, Chriſt makes men free from this legal Bondage. *If the ſon make you free, then ye are free indeed*: Chriſt is the man, that is *as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempeſt: as rivers of water in a drie place, as the ſhadow of a great rock in a weary land.* Gal. 4. Joh. 8. 36. Iſa. 32. 2.

Queſt. But in what particulars lye theſe refreſhings, that weary Souls have from the Lord at their converſion?

Anſ.

Anſ. Firſt, as the ſprit convinced them before of ſin and wrath, ſo now he convinceth them of righteouſneſs to cover the ſinner and his ſins, and to *preſent him without ſpot and wrinkle* to himſelf and his Father. Oh what a refreſhing is this righteouſneſs to a poor Soul who ſees all his own righteouſneſs to be as filthy rags! *Adam* did not ſee himſelf ſo righteous in his ſtate of innocency, as a convert may ſee himſelf in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt: *Adams* was not *everlaſting righteouſneſs*, as Chriſts is.

John 16. 8
Eph. 5. 27.
Iſa. 64. 6.
Deut 9. 24.

Secondly, The Spirit of Adoption ſucceeds the ſpirit of bondage, in a convert: *God hath not given us the ſpirit of bondage again to fear, but the ſpirit of adoption.* The Law now changes its office towards a poor ſinner. It came before with thunder and Lightning, which made the heart to ake, and put the ſinners conſcience into tremblings, made him *Magormiſſabib*, a terror to himſelf round about. But now the Spirit of Adoption takes place, the Soul now can ſay, My God. The Law owns full ſatisfaction, and lays by its condemning power. And this cools the heats that the conſcience of the poor ſinner was in.

Rom. 8. 15.
Pſal. 42. 11.

Thirdly, Now the ſpirit doth his Office, as *the Comforter*. Chriſt gave the ſpirit this Name, *the Comforter*, for this purpoſe, to turn the converted ſinners ſorrow into joy. He that was *the ſpirit of burning*, in the convinced ſinners conſcience; to the converted, is *the ſpirit of gladneſs.*

John 14. 26.
Mal. 4. 1.
Iſa 4 4.
Iſa. 51. 3.

Fourthly, After converſion the ſpirit further befriends a convert, in joyning with the evidence of conſcience on his behalf. At firſt the ſpirit witneſſes againſt him, and makes his conſcience to do the like, as he did in *Saul*, and *Judas*. But after converſion, the *Spirit it ſelf witneſſeth with our ſpirits, that we are the children of God.* Conſcience in a man is as a thouſand witneſſes; what then is the ſpirit of God, when he undertakes the work?

Rom. 8. 16.

The ſpirit hath an aſſuring Office, and all the expreſſions in Scripture relating to Aſſurance, are applied to him: he *beareth record* in Heaven, and in earth: He is an *earneſt*, and He is *a Seal*, and He is the *ſpirit of truth*; all this, he is ordained both by the Father and the Son to be to a convert. As the work of converſion is the ſpirits; ſo alſo the evidencing

1 John 5. 7,8.
2 Cor. 1.
John 14. 17.

of

of that ſtate, is his work. The Holy Ghoſt caſts out fears, and fancies, and diſturbing apprehenſions, that work in a mans convinced conſcience, and gives him the Spirit of a ſound mind.

Fifthly, Now all the offices of Chriſt let out refreſhing influence on the Soul of a convert; he is under the influence of his merit, and ſpirit. Chriſt, as a Prieſt, removes his guilt: *Tho his ſins be ſought for, they cannot be found.* And Chriſt as King, gives him power over his luſts, and over the Prince of Darkeneſs, his ſpiritual enemies, which are the worſt. And he leaneth on Chriſts boſom, as his Prophet; he knows his ſtate in God, and *the things that are freely given him of God.* Beams of holy Light dart from Heaven into his heart; and ſweet gales of peace into his conſcience: and his *Soul is filled with marrow and fatneſs* when he meditates on God; who uſed not to be in his thoughts before, or if he was, to his terror: And now the creature too is altered; that which was but water is now Wine; the vanity and vexation of ſpirit that was in it before, is now taken away. Whatſoever happens to him, that is materially evil, is changed to his good; as *Balaams* curſe was into a bleſſing: The ſting is not only pulled out of death, but out of every thing elſe that is evil. And Ordinances, which before were as *Gideons* dry fleece, are now as his wet fleece; and Manna, is Manna, and not light meat: All the Perſons in the Godhead have a compaſſionate and kind ſence for him: the Father *pitieth him, as a man his Son*; and *Chriſt is touched with the feeling of his infirmities*; and *the ſpirit helpeth his infirmities.* And more, he hath now communion with all the Perſons in the Godhead, which *Adam* had not in his ſtate of innocency ſo diſtinctly; he had not that diſtinct communion with Chriſt; he had not that liberty to eat of the Tree of Life, as a Believer hath, who lives upon Chriſts fleſh and Blood: Chriſt is to him the *Bread of life*, and the *water of life*: Chriſt is *that hidden Manna*, the *Bread from heaven*, the *Tree of life*, that *true vine*, that *pure river* of Water of Life: he is *the Life*, *hath life in himſelf*, and is *a quickening ſpirit*, and *quickeneth whom he will* And to many other uſeful and delightful things, doth the Holy Ghoſt liken Jeſus Chriſt, in Heaven and Earth; he is *the ſun of righteouſneſs*, *the bright morning ſtar*, *the light of the world*, *the lyon of the tribe of Judah*, *the lamb of God*, *the lilly*,

Jer. 50. 20.

1 Cor. 2. 12.

Pſal. 10. 4.

Pſal. 103. 13. Heb. 4. 15. Rom. 8. 26.

Matthew 4. 3. Rev. 22. 16. John 1. 5.

lilly, roſe and *the tree of life*; he is Husband and Wife, Father and Mother, Brother and Siſter, and Friends: Believers are ſo to him; much more is he ſo to them, *who is all, and in all.*

Matth. 12. 50. Col. 3. 11.

Thus you have had ſome hints, what thoſe refreſhments are which come from the preſence of the Lord, to Repenting ſinners.

Queſt. But do all Converts fare alike?

Anſ. No, not ſenſibly, or in their own apprehenſions, and at preſent. Some have but a few ſtews from *Egypt* to *Cannan*; when others paſs thorow a long Wilderneſs betwixt them. *Mary* wept much for the time, but the time was but ſhort, ſhe had no ſooner wiped her tears from Jeſus his feet, but he wiped them from her eyes, tells her, *her ſins were forgiven*, and bids her, Go in peace. It is with ſome Converts, as it was with *Sion*, *Before ſhe travelled, ſhe brought forth; before her pain came, ſhe was delivered of a man-child.* But others have their darker and longer days of humiliation; as *Eſther* had of purificaton before ſhe was taken by the King to be his Queen.

Luk 7. Iſa. 66. 7, 8. Eſther 2. 12.

All Converts are in Gods Family ſo ſoon as in a ſtate of Grace; but ſome are not received to that near Communion with God, which others enjoy. The other Diſciples leaned not on Jeſus his Boſom, as *John* did. As the Converſion of ſome ſinners, is with great obſervation; So is the entertainment they have from God, at their coming in to him.

Yet the reaſon why ſome lye ſo long under fears of God, and of their ſtate, is of themſelves: their Souls *refuſe to be comforted*, as his did. A weak conſcience refuſeth comfort, as a weak Stomach doth Meat. Or it may be, they look for Peace and ſettlement of conſcience in Sanctity, from their own, and not Chriſt Merits. But alas, they may ſeek it long enough ſo, and not find it, as *Saul* did his Fathers Aſſes. *Paul* knew this when he ſaid to the Philippians; *That I may be found in Chriſt, not having mine own righteouſneſs which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt.*

Pſal. 77. 2.

Or it may be, they lay the guilt of ſin in the wrong place, that is, upon their own conſciences: whereas they ſhould tranſfer it upon their Sacrifice for ſin, which was Jeſus Chriſt, *The lamb of God that taketh away the ſin of the world.* It is Chriſt Sacrificed

John 1. 22.

Sacrificed for a ſinner, and which alone can take away the conſcience of ſin, that is, the trouble and terror of conſcience for ſin. Heb. 10. 2.

USE, 1. This ſerves for encouragement to thoſe who are at a diſtance from God, to return to him: you ſee your welcome and entertainment; you will have Angels Food. God will *rejoyce over you with his whole heart, and with his whole ſoul.* Jer. 32. 41. And Jeſus Chriſt will bring you *into his banqueting houſe*, or Houſe of Wine. And the Spirit will do the office of the Comforter to you. And as the Angels made acclamations at the Birth of Chriſt, ſo will they do at your New-Birth: when a ſinner is born again, *there is joy in the preſence of the Angels of God.* Cant. 2. 4. Luke 15. 10.

And if you be not moved at all this; I may ſay to you, as the Lord ſaid to the *Jews*, *Earth, Earth, Earth!* So, O ſtony, ſtony, ſtony Heart, that is not affected with theſe condeſcentions of God! O what will a ſinner anſwer when Chriſt ſaith to him, how often would I, and you would not? Jer. 22. 29.

It is not for want of call or encouragement, that ſinners come not in to God: He *commands men every where to repent.* And he intreats them to be reconciled: *As tho God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſts ſtead be ye reconciled unto God.* And he gives the higheſt aſſurance of his reallity in the caſe, that is poſſible: *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* And whatſoever plea men may make from their impotency, for their not repenting, and turning to God; yet they will aſſuredly find that it is not their *cannot*, but their *will not*, that will damn them. *They will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord.* Acts 17. 30. 2 Cor. 5. 20. Ez. 33. 11. Hoſ. 5. 4.

USE 2. The ſecond Uſe of the point may be for Caution to Converts, that they miſtake not in their expectations. Think not your Father in Heaven ſhall Feaſt you always alike; the Fatted Calf is not to be killed every day. *Abraham* made a Feaſt for *Iſaac* at his weaning, there was great joy that day: and ſo doth God a Convert in the day that he weans him from his Luſts, and from the World; now God maks you *a feaſt of* Gen. 21. 8.

fat things, of refined wine. But you must not reckon upon the like every day. It was but once that *Paul* was taken up into the third Heavens; and twice that God appeared to *Solomon*. A
1 Kings 11. Godly mans first and last days are commonly his best. *I loved Israel when he was a child, saith God*, Hos. 11. 1. And *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright*; the latter word explains the first; *for the end of that man is peace.* And as at first,
Psal. 37. 37. mans diet was only green Herbs and Fruits, but in after times
Gen. 1. 29. he had the liberty of every living creature: So God at first
Gen. 9. 3. may diet a Convert low, and afterwards make him to live higher; more sensibly upon Christ, whose *flesh is meat indeed*:
Gal. 2. 20. and to say, *the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the*
John. 7. 37. *Son of God.* Christ is a sure supply to all thirsty Souls; *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*

Quest. But how is it then that many Converts spend most of their days in the Wilderness, and in sorrow?

Ans. 1. It is their own fault, if they have not a comfortable life even in the Wilderness: for this is the promise, *I will*
Hos. 2. 14. *allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her.*

2. Know that there is no condition befals a man in a state of Grace, but comfort belongs to it. In sufferings for Christ,
2 Cor. 1. 5. your comforts exceed your sorrows: *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation by Christ aboundeth*: indeed su-
Rom. 8. 37. perabundeth; for as the Apostle saith, *In all these we are more than conquerors.* And for all other tryals and temptations, there are promises of comfort under them, and of the pre-
Psal. 91. 25. sence of God with you in them. *I will be with him in trouble.*
Isa. 43. 2. And *I will be with thee when thou passest thorow the water and thorow the fire.* And what is the presence of God with us for in such cases? It is to strengthen, help, uphold us: *fear you*
Isa. 41. 10. *not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, and uphold you with the right-hand of my righteousness.*

And 3. There is no evil befals a man in a state of Grace, but he may act Grace in it; and the acting of Grace brings in comfort. If faith be acted, it fills the heart with joy and
Rom. 15. 13. peace: *The God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing.*

And

And hope brings comfort with it: *We rejoyce in hope of the glory of God*, Rom. 5. 2. And *patience works* comfortable *experience*, ver. 5. And *love casteth out fear*, that hath torment, 1 *John* 4. 18. And meekneſs hath the promiſe of *Satisfaction*, *Pſal.* 22. 26. And he will *beautifie the meek with ſalvation*, Pſal. 149. 4. *The meek will he guide in judgement, the meek will he teach his way*, Pſal. 25. 9. *The meek ſhall inherit the earth*, Matth. 5. 5. And *ſincerity* begets *rejoycing*. And God himſelf *dwells with the humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble*, Iſa 57. 15. Grace and peace are commonly joyned together by the Apoſtle, in his ſalutations. So that all the Tryals of good men, have honey in their Carcaſſes, as *Sampſons* Lyon had; and like *Jonathans* Rod, are dipped in honey. What then is the reaſon, that ſome Chriſtians can ſpeak no more experimentally herein? But becauſe they are impatient, and paſſionate at Gods trying providences, as *Jonah* was. Had we Faith at ſuch times, it would bring in reſt and ſatisfaction; and had we patience, we ſhould *poſſeſs our ſouls*; and could we wait, God would work ſuch things for us, as are worth our waiting for. *Eye hath not ſeen, or ear heard, beſides thee, O God, what thou haſt prepared for them that wait for thee*, Iſa. 64. 4. 2 Cor. 1. 22.

And thus much for the 23*d.* verſe, which deſcribeth the entertainment the Prodigal received upon his return to his Father.

Now follows the reaſon of it, in the 24*th.* verſe; *For this my ſon was dead, and is alive again; he was loſt, and is found*: *And they began to be merry.* Whereof in the ſucceeding Chapters.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

Sheweth, That before Converſion, every man is a dead man. From the firſt Clauſe of the twenty fourth Verſe.

For this my ſon was dead.

THE Prodigal herein, as well as in other particulars, repreſenting the ſtate of man by nature; we have this evident Doctrine:

Doct. That all men before converſion, are dead men. All men, even the Elect themſelves; the Scripture makes no diſtinction in this caſe. *We all,* (all we that believe) *were by nature the children of wrath, as well as others,* Eph. 2. 3. And, *All were dead.* And therefore converſion is called a paſſing from death to life. *By this we know that we are paſſed from death to life,* 1 John 3. 14. The fall of the firſt man, caſt all his poſterity into a dead ſleep: they have no *feeling.* Many of the *Heathens,* both Poets and Philoſophers, have borrowed ſeveral fancies from the Hiſtory of Scripture: as the *Eliſian* Fields from the Garden of *Eden*; *Nectar* and *Ambroſia* from the miraculous Manna: *Euridice* her being ſlain with the Serpent, from the Serpents beguiling *Eve,* and many more. And ſome of their ſublime notions, receive the greater dignity, from their correſpondency to the Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. So, anſwerable to this very point, of a natural mans being a dead man, *Pythagoras* made uſe of this Embleme, To ſet νεκοτάφιον, an empty Coffin, in every mans place, that left him and his rules of life.

2 Cor. 5. 15.

Ephe. 4. 18.
Gen. 2. 21.

The Scriptures are abundant in the proof of this point: *If through the offence of one, many were dead. Adams* poſterity were dead by his offence as well as himſelf. *If he died for all, then were all* dead: even the Elect, as well as others. Thoſe that roſe

Rom. 5. 5.
2 Cor. 5. 14
Matth. 27.

roſe out of their graves, at Chriſts Reſurrection, were no leſs dead, than thoſe that did not ariſe; ſo thoſe choſen veſſels which God calls and converts from a ſtate of ſin, to himſelf, they were before as dead in ſin as others. And it is not only ſo with profane and looſe ſinners; but with every man, tho never ſo moralized, if not a Goſpel convert; he is a dead man.

Now this ſtate of death, in which every natural man is, lyeth in four things.

1. In a ſeparation from God. As the Soul is the life of the body; ſo is God the life of the Soul: *David* calls him, *the God of his life*. Now when the Soul is gone from the body, the body is but a dead carcaſe, and ſo is every man while ſeparated from God. Every natural man is *without God in the world*. This was ſignifyed by *Adams* remove from the preſence of God: he *hid himſelf* from God. And by the Lords driving *Cain* out of his preſence. God was the ſtock upon which man grew at firſt: *Adam, the ſon of God*: and we are his off-ſpring. Now when a branch or arm of a Tree is cut off, it withers and dies. Upon the fall, all men were cut off from God; as the *Jews, caſt away*, branches *broken off*, and ſo withered and dead. And therefore their calling is ſaid to be life from the dead. A natural man hath no Union with God, and ſo no communion; wit hout any ſpiritual influence from God: *Alienated from the life of God*.

Pſalm 42. 8. Ephe. 2. 12. 13. Gen. 3. 10. Gen 4. 14. Luc 3. 38. Act. 17. 28. Rom. 11. ver. 15. ver. 17. Ephe. 4. 18.

2*ly*. Every man in his natural condition, is dead in law, by the guilt of ſin. He is a condemned perſon, tho ſentence be not executed, He is *condemned already*. There is a high charge lyes againſt every Soul in a natural ſtate.

John 3. 18.

1. The guilt of *Adams* ſin lies upon him, till it be taken off by Chriſt. Whilſt a man remains in the firſt *Adam*, he is under the guilt of the firſt ſin: *by the offence of one*; that is, *Adam, Judgement came upon all men to condemnation*.

Rom. 5. 18. Rom. 5. 13.

2 Every man in his natural condition is under the guilt of Original ſin, the corruption of nature: which alſo brings mankind under death, even ſuch as have not ſinned after the ſimilitude of *Adams* tranſgeſſion. And,

Ephe. 2. 1.

3. Every

3*ly*, Every man, in his natural ſtate, is under the guilt of actual ſins: and ſo is *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* He hath not the life of God in him, no power in him to work the works of God. Now when a man lies under all this guilt, he muſt needs be dead in law, in a ſtate of damnation.

John 3. 20.

3*ly*. Men in a ſtate of nature, are dead in reſpect of the pollution and power of ſin: men that were legally polluted, were reckoned as dead men, for the time, as to any converſe with the living: ſo *Miriam*, when ſhe was leprous, was ſeparated from the Camp. They were as *free amongſt the dead:* and the Apoſtle joyns the Law of ſin, and the Law of death together. Sin eats up all ſpiritual life, in the Soul; as the worm doth the kernel in the Nut: ſo that men are in this ſence alſo *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.*

Num. 14. 10, 15.
Rom. 8. 2.
Ephe. 2. 1.

4*ly*. Every natural man is dead in his principles and operations.

1. He wants a principle of ſpiritual life; Chriſt hath not breathed upon him, and ſaid, *receive the ſpirit*, as he did upon the Diſciples.

Heb. 6. 1.
Heb. 9. 14.

2. He is dead in his Operations, as well as Principles; his conſcience is a neſt of *dead works*: his very duties are dead works, his praying, his hearing, his alms, are but dead works, ſtill-born, like the Harlots child: every thought, and every word, and every work of a natural man, is infected and poyſoned. His ſacrifices to God, are like thoſe in the Law, dead ſacrifices: he offers not himſelf *a living ſacrifice* to God, as Believers do. All his good works, good for the matter of them, are but carcaſſes: they have body, but no Soul: they want Faith in Chriſt, and love to God, and the help of the ſpirit unto both. Except they had a principle of ſpritual life, they can have no ſpritual operations: *A clean thing cannot come out of an unclean*: *If one that is unclean touch any of theſe*: that is Bread, or Pottage, or Oyl, or Wine, or any Meat, *Shall it be clean? it ſhall be unclean*: ſo is this people, and ſo is every work of their hands. And ſaith the Apoſtle, *Unto them that are defiled, nothing is pure.* So that a natural man is a dead man every way, as to ſpiritual life. For he is removed from God, the fountain of life; *With thee is the fountain of life.* And he is dead in Law, through the guilt of ſin that lyes upon him: and his very

1 Kings 3.
Rom. 12. 1.
Hag. 2. 13, 14.
Tit. 1. 15.
Pſalm 36. 9.

very Principles and Operations are dead things; he is a ſink of ſin and uncleanneſs; a Leper all over; *From the crown of the head, to the ſole of the foot, there is no ſoundneſs, but bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.* The heart is as full of noiſome luſts, as a dead Carcaſe of Worms. There is a Diſeaſe in every part, the Mind, the Will, the Affections. There is a κακοξία, an evil ſtate of Soul in every natural man. And when we ſee a man diſeaſed all over, within and without, his very vitals decaied and rotten, we ſay, he is a dead man. And this is the true ſtate of every man in a ſtate of nature. And tho ſome may have painted outſides, as Tombs have; yet *within they are full of rottenneſs and uncleanneſs*; as Chriſt ſaid of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. Isa. 1. 6. Matth. 23. 27.

Uſe 1. *Firſt*, This informs us of the ſad condition of every natural man; Tho we may not revile him, and call him a dead Dog, as *Abiſhai* did *Shimei*; yet we may truly call him a dead man. All his faculties are ſpiritually dead; his Judgment, and Will, and Affections, and Conſcience: and ſo, all his works are dead works. A natural man is a ſad Spectacle to a ſpiritual man; as a dead Corps is to one that looks upon it. Natural men may have Parts, and Gifts, and Morality; and yet all this may be but like painting, and garniſhing of a lifeleſs Image. Some Pictures may be ſo accuratly drawn, that they may at a glance ſeem alive; and others may be bungled, and yet all alike without life, the curious as well as the courſe. So men that have a very plauſible outſide, may be dead in ſin, as well as thoſe that are debauched. A Clock hath motion, as well as a man; but it is but an artificial motion, not from an inward Principle. And ſo a man may have a very fair outſide, and look like a Religious man, and yet may be moved in Religion only by ſome outward Bias of credit or profit; by ſomething of ſelf, and not at all by the Grace of God. If you could ſee into his Principles, he hath never been humbled, nor removed from his own bottom at all. Conſideration of ſelf-intereſt may make a man ſeem zealous for God, as we ſee in *Jehu*. Oh the ſad condition of theſe men, they are dead while they ſeem to be alive. Yea, they are twice dead, dead by nature, and ſelf-murderers by Practice: *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed they ſelf.* It was doleful to ſee one dead in every houſe throughout 2 Sam. 16. 9. 2 Kings 10. 1 Tim. 5. 6. Hoſ. 13. 9.

Egypt, tho but for one night: Oh! how doleful is it to ſee moſt in a Houſe, or in a Town dead, and to lie ſo for many days, or years together?

Uſe 2. *Secondly*, And therefore let me Exhort all men in this eſtate, to *ariſe and ſtand up from the dead. Skin for skin*, ſaid the Devil; *and all that a man hath, will he give for his life.* And if a man will give ſo much for his natural Life, what ſhould he do for his ſpiritual and eternal Life?

Eph. 5. 14. Job 2. 4.

Queſt. But can a dead man know that he is dead?

Anſ. Yes, a man that is ſpiritually dead may know that he is ſo. The Spirit can *convince men* of their ſinful ſtate. He can make a natural man ſay, I am a dead man, as the people ſaid, *We are all dead men.*

John 16. 8. Exod. 12. 33.

Queſt. But what ſhall a natural man do to recover Life?

Anſ. Go to Chriſt for Life: *You will not come to me, that ye may have life. The ſon quickneth whom he will.* Chriſt is *the life.* When Jeſus ſaid to *Lazarus, ariſe*; he came out of his Grave. *The hour is come wherein*, ſaith our Saviour, *the dead ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of God, and they that hear, ſhall live.* Not only the dead in their Graves, but the dead in their ſins. Chriſt hath a voice, that can make the dead Sinner hear and live; that is, believe in him to Life. *The life I live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the ſon of God*, Gal. 2. 20.

John 5. 40. John 5 21. John 14. 6. Joh. 11. 43, 44. John 5. 25. Verſe 28.

Queſt. But how ſhould we come to Chriſt, that we may have Life?

Anſ. You muſt come weeping over your ſelves, as *Mary* and *Martha* did over *Lazarus*; and then Chriſt will weep over you, as he did over him, when he heareth you bemoaning your ſelves; then he alſo bemoans you, as the Lord did *Ephraim.*

John 11. 35. Jer. 31. 21.

Oh, lye in Chriſts way, as the people did that had Infirmities, offer your ſelves as objects of his pity; cry to him, *Lord, that I may receive my ſight.* Lord, that I may receive Life. What Arguments did *David*, and *Heman*, and *Hezekiah*, plead

plead with againſt natural Death? *Lord, in death there is no remembrance of thee. Wilt thou ſhew wonders to the dead? I ſhall not ſee the Lord, even the Lord in the Land of the living*: It was ſpoken with tears. What Arguments then, ſhould a poor Soul uſe againſt ſpiritual Death, that is a thouſand times worſe than natural Death? Natural Death is conſiſtent with the Love of Chriſt, as we ſee in *Lazarus*; and with bleſſedneſs: *Bleſſed are the dead, that die in the Lord.* But ſpiritual Death is not, it is eternal Death begun.

Pſal. 6. 5. Pſal. 88. 10. Iſa. 38. 11. Rev. 14. 13.

When a poor Soul crys out, I am a dead man, Death is mine, and Hell is mine; but oh that I might live in thy ſight! as *Abraham* prayed for *Iſhmael*: Now faith begins to work on Chriſt, the Prince of Life. As the Rulers Faith did, *My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thine hand upon her, and ſhe ſhall live.* And now comes in that Great and Almighty Power that raiſeth from the dead. That Power that raiſed Chriſt from the dead, raiſeth the Sinner from his ſtate of Death. Remember then, that thoſe that are ſpiritually dead, may have a ſenſe of their ſtate, and cry out for life in the uſe of Gods inſtituted means to obtain it. They muſt uſe the means, tho God alone gives them efficacy.

Gen. 17. 18. Matth. 9. 18. 1 Cor. 3. 6.

Oh then, let every dead Soul come to Chriſt for life. He hath a Life of Juſtification for you, which will ſwallow up the Condemnation you are under. And he hath a life of Grace and Holineſs for you, which will ſwallow up the Law of Sin in you; tho not as yet, the being of ſin, *ſin that dwelleth in you.* The ſame Spirit of Holineſs that was in Chriſt, he gives to you: *To every one of us, is given grace, according to the meaſure of the gift of Chriſt.* And Chriſt hath a Life of Glory for you: *Eternal life is in his ſon. The glory which thou gaveſt me, I have given them. And father, I will that thoſe whom thou haſt given me, may be with me where I am. And he that beleiveth on the ſon, hath everlaſting life.*

Rom. 8. 1. Rom. 7. Eph. 4. 7. 1 John 5. 11. John 27. 22. Verſe 24. John 3 36.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Wherein is ſhewed, That Converſion is a Reſurrection from the dead. From the next Clauſe of the 24. Verſe.

And is alive again.

Doct. THe ſpiritual meaning of theſe words, teacheth us, that the Converſion of a Sinner, is a Reſurrection to Life again. As Chriſt ſaid of himſelf, *I am he that liveth, and was dead.* And as it was ſaid of the calling of the *Jews*, It will be *life from the dead*; ſo is it in the Converſion of a Sinner; it is a *paſſing from death to life.* God is the living God, and this diſtinguiſheth him from the dead gods of the Heathens. And ſo Converts are, in the beſt ſenſe, living Creatures.

Rev. 1. 18.
Rom. 11. 15.
1 John 3. 14.
Jer. 10. 10.
Pſal. 115.

In opening this Doctrine, I ſhall ſhew what this Life is, to which a Sinner in Converſion is reſtored. And why it is called a Reſurrection from the dead.

What is this Life? It is ſpiritual Life, the Life of Grace and Holineſs, the Life of God. The Apoſtle ſpeakes of natural men, as *alienated from the life of God.* It is the *Divine nature, the ſeed of God.* And therefore Converts are ſaid to be *begotten and born of God.* Begotten and born to the likeneſs of God, as *Adam* is ſaid to have begotten a Son in his own likeneſs. And the way of conveying this Life to a Sinner in his Converſion, is by Union with Chriſt. As Philoſophers define natural Life to be the Union of the Soul and Body; ſo ſpiritual Life is the Union of Chriſt and a Believer. Chriſt is his principle of life: *Not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: He is a quickening ſpirit.*

Eph. 4. 18.
2 Pet. 1. 4.
1 John 3. 9.
1 John 5. 18.
Gen. 5. 3.
Gal. 2. 20.
1 Cor. 15. 45.

There are divers ſorts of Life, whoſe Beings are founded in divers Cauſes. A vegetative Life is that of Plants, and lies in the vigor of the Sap. A ſenſitive Life is that of Beaſts, and lies in the vigor of the Blood. A rational Life, is the Life of Man, and lies in

in the Union of Soul and Body. And ſpiritual Life, is the Life of Believers, and lies in their Union with Chriſt. And a Life of Glory, lies in *ſeeing God as he is, in living immediately with the Lord.* In living altogether upon God. 1 Cor. 13. 12.

Now as that which hath Life, is more excellent than that 1 Theſſ. 4. 18.
which hath not; ſo the ſeveral kinds of Life are more excellent 1 Cor. 15. 18.
one than another. Spiritual life, whereof we are ſpeaking, excelleth not only the ſenſitive Life, but alſo rational, as it is corrupted by the Fall. It is *the life of God*, a Divine life, a life of Holineſs, which made man like to God at firſt, and reſtores him to the likeneſs of God again. As the people ſaid of *Paul* and *Barnabas*, after they had wrought a great Miracle, *The Gods are come down to us in the likeneſs of men*: So the ſpiritual Life, Acts 14. 11.
which is called *the life of God*, makes men to be in the likeneſs of God. Now God doth not communicate this Life to Converts immediately, as he did to *Adam*; but by his Son the Mediator. *God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: He that hath the Son, hath Life.* So that ſpiri- 1 Joh. 5. 11, 12.
tual Life is a mans Union with Chriſt, *I am the life*, ſaith John 14. 6.
Chriſt. This ſpiritual Life is the Effect of Chriſts Spirit, as well as the fruit of his merit. It is the fruit of his merit; for God doth not releaſe a Sinner from Death, till his Debt be paid, and Juſtice ſatisfied. And had not Chriſt done this for a Sinner, he could not himſelf have riſen from the dead: *He roſe again for our juſtification.* Rom. 4. 25.

And ſpiritual Life is an effect or work of the Spirit, which communicates to a man the Life of Chriſt, as Mediator: *He* John 16. 14.
ſhall receive of mine, and ſhall ſhew it unto you: As the Artificer makes his curious work from the *Idea* he hath of it in his mind.

But more particularly, This ſpiritual Life is a ſupernatural Power, that enables a man to move towards God, as his higheſt End. Therefore it is called *the life of God*, and we Eph. 4. 18.
are ſaid to be *alive to God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Rom. 6. 11.
No natural man hath this Life, this Power, that enables him to move towards God as his higheſt end. He hath no higher end than himſelf, in his beſt works. And therefore ſelf-denial was one of Chriſts great Doctrines he taught in his Miniſtry. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf* Matth. 16. 24.
Philoſophers ſay of Life in general, that *Vita eſt Vigor & Actus*;

Actus; it is a powerful, vigorous, and active thing. And spiritual Life is eminently such, ζωὴ ἐνὑμῖν ἐνεργεῖται, saith the Apostle, 2 *Cor.* 4. 12. *Life worketh in you*; worketh powerfully, or effectually. Philosophers say also, That the actions of rational Life are four, *Intelligere, Sentire, Movere, Nutrire*; and some add a fifth, *Generare*. That is, in the Life of man, as man, there is a power of Understanding the nature of things natural, a power of Sensation, a power of Motion, a power of Nutrition, and a power of Generation. All which are likewise the properties of spiritual Life, and more than these.

There is a power of understanding and discerning the things of God, spiritual things: *God hath revealed these things to us*
1 Cor. 2 10. *by his spirit. And we have received the spirit which is of God,*
Verse 12. *whereby we know the things that are freely given us of God.*
And the spiritual man judgeth all things: The things of the spi-
Verse 14, 15. rit of God, which a natural man cannot.

And there is a power of sense and feeling: Spiritual Life feels the bitterness and weight of sin, and hath so quick a sense thereof, that it makes a man cry out, as *Paul, O wretched man that I am!*
Rom. 7. 27. *who shall deliver me from this body of death?* And spiritual life tasteth the sweetness of Gods word; *Thy word is sweeter to me than honey.* And it hath an eye to see the *promises afar off.*
Psal. 119. 103. And it hath an *ear to hear what the spirit speaks.* And it hath
Heb. 11. 13. a smell to *savour the things of the spirit. Thy name is as oynt-*
Revelation 2. *ment poured forth, therefore do the Virgins love thee.*
Rom 8. 5.
Cant. 1. 3. Again, Spiritual life hath the power of Motion and Action.
Genesis 5. 24. It makes a man *walk with God*, as *Enoch* did, and to *go from*
Psalm 84. 7. *strength to strength.* It makes him *go about doing good*, as our
Acts 10. 38. Lord Jesus Christ did. And spiritual life hath the power of Nutrition, it grows, that is, makes those that have it, *to*
Eph. 4. 15. *grow up in Christ, and to increase with the increase of God,* Col. 2. 19.

And spiritual life hath a generative power. Grace is of a prolifical nature. *Paul*, a man full of the Life of God, begot
1 Cor. 4. 15. the *Corinthians* to the Faith, and he begot *Onesimus* in his
Philem. 10. bonds. As some say, *Sol & Homo generant Hominem*; the Sun and Man beget man; so God and his Ministers beget Grace in men: God is the Principle, they are his Instru-
1 Cor. 3. 9. mens: *We are* Θεοῦ συνεργοί, *workers together with God.* And so

ſo in the exerciſe, as well as the firſt infuſion of Grace: *Your zeal hath provoked many.* 2 Cor. 9. 2.
But more than all this, there is in ſpiritual life, an abiding power; it is an everlaſting life, becauſe it is from Chriſt the Fountain of Life. He *hath life in himſelf.* John 5. 26.
And *he is a quickning ſpirit*, which could not be ſaid of the firſt *Adam.* Chriſt makes a man, whoſe life he is, to live for ever: *Becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo.* John 14. 19.
Spiritual life in *Adam*, was like *Manna*, that was daily gathered, which was worm-eaten and corrupted, if gathered out of time or order. But ſpiritual life in Saints, is like *Manna* in the golden Pot, it corrupteth not. Exod. 16. Exod. 16. 33. Col. 3. 3.

Laſtly, Spiritual life is a life much more ſerviceable and uſeful to God, than any other life. This is impli'd in the deſcription before given of ſpiritual life, that it impowers a man to move towards God as his higheſt end. It is the life of God, not only as it is from him; but alſo as it carries a man to him, to walk with him, to live with him, and to live upon him.

Spiritual life, above any out of Heaven, makes a man a profitable creature, as *Paul* told *Philemon*, *Oneſimus* was become after his Converſion. Men in their natural condition advance themſelves, and not God. So did *Jehu*, a great pretender for God: *Come and ſee my zeal for the Lord of hoſts.* But himſelf was his End, his own Honour, and the Eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom; and that he had for four Generations, *ver.* 30. He had a reward ſutable to his mind, in the work he did. Verſe 11. 2 Kings 10. 16.
But Grace advanceth God above ſelf: *Not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* 1 Cor. 15. 10.
A gracious Soul ſaith, as Chriſt ſaid, *Father, glorifie thy name.* John 12. 28.
A ſpiritual man is full of the Will of God; Saith as Jeſus Chriſt, *I come to do thy will, not my own.* Col. 4 12. Pſal. 40. 8. John 6. 38.
He is amongſt Gods *firſt fruits.* James 1. 18.
Now the firſt fruits were peculiarly Gods. God hath *ſet him apart for himſelf.* Exod. 23. 19.
He is *holineſs to the Lord.* Pſalm 4. 2.
He is amongſt Gods firſt Born, which he hath conſecrated to himſelf. Jer. 2. 3.
So much for the Deſcription of that ſpiritual life, the life of God, to which a Convert is reſtored. Heb. 12 23.

Secondly, Why is the Converſion of a Sinner called a Reſurrection, a living again? The reaſon is, To ſhew whoſe the Power is by which it is wrought. There goes no leſs than

an

an Infinite Power to bring it about. There was no power in
John 11. *Lazarus*, to joyn with Christ in his Resurrection. There is
Acts 7. 51. power in a natural man to oppose his Resurrection to a state
Rom. 8. 7. of Grace, but nothing to help it. Spiritual life is the *Divine*
James 1. 18. *nature, the life of God, the seed of God, begotten of the will of God.* So that the Holy Ghost hath Consecrated the Terms of *Creation* and *Resurrection*, by which to express a mans Conversion, thereby to exclude all power but Gods in the work. God uses means about a Sinners conversion, but none in it. Christ may say in this respect, as well as in the point of Redemption: *I alone, and of the people there was none with*
Isaiah 63. *me.*

The Prophets *Elijah* and *Elisha*, raised the dead; but it was by the power of God. And the Apostles raised the dead, but it
Acts 3. 16. was by the Power of Christ, *through faith in his name.* And no less doth the Resurrection of the Soul need *that exceeding*
Eph. 1. 19, 20. *greatness of Gods power; the working of his mighty power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Use *First*, Let this put all men upon tryal. Many are
1 Tim. 5. 6. certainly *dead, whilst they live.* They have a name to *live, and*
Rev. 3. 1. *yet are dead.* Professors of Religion may live and die under a delusion. And therefore,

1. Look not only, nor so much, what you are without, as what you are within, for the discovery of your state towards God. View your Principles, as well as Actions. A Parret may speak, and a Watch, or a Poppet move; and so a man spiritually dead may do the actions of a man spiritually alive: he may profess Religion; and he may pray, and
Mar. 6. 20. hear, and forbear much evil, and do much good: *Herod heard John gladly, and did many things.* Therefore it is your Principle that must decide the case. Consider whether you have a Principle of spiritual Life in you; such a Principle as may be called, *The life of God*, breathed into you by the Spirit of God; as it is said, *God breathed into man the breath of*
Gen. 2. 7. *life, and he became a living soul.* Such a Principle of life as inclines you powerfully to live with God, and to live to him, as your highest end: So that you can say, *Whom have I in*
Psal. 73. 25. *heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.* A man that hath this Principle of spiritual Life, is as

if he had a new ſoul in him. Every man hath the Faculties of three ſouls, tho he have but one ſoul: he hath the faculties of the vegetative, ſenſitive, and Rational ſoul. But in converſion a man receiveth, as it were, the powers of another ſoul. As the King ſaw, beſides three men, a fourth, like to the Son of God. So, beſides the powers aforeſaid, a man that is ſpiritually alive, Dan. 3. 25. receives thoſe of a fourth and higher life, like to the life of the Son of God. So that a man is now plainly and ſenſibly what once he was not; he finds all other powers and faculties ſubordinate to this life. The ſpiritual man now, is the man. When the world, or Satan, comes knocking at his heart, to be let in, as formerly; they find another inhabitant, that hath no kindneſs, nor any entertainment for them. Oh conſider, whether you have a principle of ſpiritual life! You cannot date this from the time of your reforming a groſſer courſe of life, and applying your ſelves onely to ſome viſible Religion; but you muſt make your eſtimate by a principle within, that makes you able, and inclines all your faculties, your mind, will, and affections, to move towards God, to live with him, and to him.

Oh judge not your ſelves by the goodlieſt outſide! The greateſt Moraliſt may be much eſtranged from the life of Mar. 12. God. And therefore, when ſuch a man is indeed converted to God, he ſeeth as great a change in himſelf, as the moſt profane man doth at his converſion, eſpecially in the point of ſelf-conceit, and ſelf-confidence. The caſe is evident in *Paul*, he was ſuch a man as we ſpeak of; before his converſion *he lived a Phariſee*, after the ſtraiteſt Sect of their Religion: and then he verily thought himſelf alive, *I was alive without the Law once*: Rom. 7 9. That is, before I underſtood the holineſs and ſpiritualneſs of it. But at his converſion to Jeſus Chriſt, when the Law came cloſe to his conſcience, then he found himſelf a dead man; and that to be ſin, which he thought not to be a ſin before; that is, inward concupiſcence and ſelf-confidence, or truſting to his own righteouſneſs. He now mightily changed his thoughts of his former ſelf; *What things were gain to him* Phil 3. 7. *before his converſion*; after, he *counted loſs for Chriſt*, his Zech 3 3. own righteouſneſs now, was like rags, like *Joſhua*'s filthy garments.

2*ly*. Spiritual life cannot subsist on such things, as other lives can: as it is a more excellent life than others; so it is supported by more excellent things. The life of Plants is preserved and nourished by the ground; and the life of beasts, by the grass of the field; and the life of man, by other creatures. But spiritual life, which is the life of Saints, lives upon God himself: *When there is no fruit in the vine, nor blossom on the fig tree, nor flock in the fold, nor herd in the stall; yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.*

Hab. 3. 17, 18

And spiritual life is sustained by the word of God: *I have esteemed thy word more than my necessary food. Thy word is sweet to my taste. Man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* This life lives upon Christ. *The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* As Christ said, *I have meat to eat, that ye know not of*: and, *my meat is to do the will of him that sent me.* So it is with a man that hath spiritual life, he cannot live without Sabbaths and Ordinances; nor without Christ, as we see in the spouse.

Job 23. 12. Psal. 119. 103. Matth. 4. 4. Gal. 2. 20. Joh 4. 32, 33. Cant 5.

Spiritual life, and spiritual meat, and spiritual converse, suite best together. Yea grace, even abovt carnal things, converseth spiritually. And therefore, in some respects, a man after conversion, tho he live not so much on the creature, as he did before; yet he tasteth more sweetness in his creature-enjoyments than before: as *Jeremiah* said, *my sleep was sweet to me.* And the reason is, because he now enjoys his creature-comforts, as they are Christs purchase for him, and refined by Christ. *All are yours, and you are Christs.* What he hath of the creature, be it much or little, it tastes of Christ; and this makes it sweet to him.

Jer. 31. 26. 1 Cor. 3. 23.

3*ly*. Remember what spiritual life is: as natural life is the union of Soul and body; so spiritual life is our union with Christ. And you must know this union with Christ, by the new-Creature: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* And you may know the new-creature in you, by the new-covenant, by a New-covenant-heart in you, which is a tender heart, *a heart of flesh*, a heart that knows God; *They shall*

2 Cor. 5. 17. Eze. 36. 25.

all

all know me from the greateſt to the leaſt: That is, they ſhall know me from all other Gods, and they ſhall know me in my relation to them to be their God And a heart to love God; *I will circumciſe thy heart, that thou maiſt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul:* And a heart that hath the law of God in it. So that their work, and their delight is to obey the will of God. Jer. 31. 34. Deut. 30. 6. Jer. 31 33. Pſal. 40. 8.

Conſider moreover, how this union came about. Chriſt is conceived in mens hearts, as in the Virgins womb, by the Holy-Ghoſt, on Gods part; and by aſſent, on ours: *Be it as thou haſt ſaid,* ſaith *Mary.* There is in our union with Chriſt a mutual conſent: *My beloved is mine, and I am his:* And, *I am my beloveds, and my beloved is mine.* And hereupon, there is a mutual ſympathy: Chriſt is very ſenſibly *affected with our infirmities.* And we are affected with his excellency: *Yea doubtleſs, I count all things loſs for the excellency of the knowledg of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Chriſt.* Luc. 1. Cant. 2. 16. Cant. 6. 3 Heb. 4 Cant. 5 Phil. 3 8.

Laſtly, In this union there is one ſpirit in Chriſt and us; *He that is joined to the Lord, is one ſpirit.* It is the ſpirit of Chriſt that acteth us in prayer and every other duty. There is a propenſity and tendency in us to walk as Chriſt did; and to move towards him, and to live to him, on whom we live. 1 Cor. 6. 17. Gal. 4. 6. 1 John 2. 6.

2. Uſe, *Secondly,* This Doctrine is uſeful to exhortation.

1. To you that are alive again, and have this Life of God in Chriſt: Oh live after the manner of this life: It lies in Grace and Comfort; and you may act the one, when you feel not the other: O, do the actions of ſpiritual life: One man may live more of this life in a day, than others in many days.

Spiritual life is a powerful life; it is ſo in motion towards God, and action for God, and ſo many of our actions as are not of this nature, are dead and loſt. All you do in Religion it ſelf, that points not to God, they are dead work; gilt over as counterfeit money, but the metal is baſe. You will be *ſaved as by fire,* with much difficulty: Dead duties, and dead works are utterly unbecoming men that have ſpiritual life: Chriſt in you is a *quickning ſpirit;* and *the root that beareth you,* is full of Sap. There may be numbneſs where there is natural life; and ſo alſo where there is ſpiritual life: A man that hath ſpiritual life, may ſlumber and ſleep; ſo did the Spouſe; ſo did the five wiſe 1 Cor. 3. 13. 2 Cor. 15. 45. John 15. Cant. 5. 2. Matthew 25.

Rev. 3. 1. Virgins. The things of God in you, may be *ready to dye.* Therefore rub and chafe your ſelves, till you get more warmth and heat into your hearts and affections to things above: that you may live more to God, and make it manifeſt, *That your deeds* Joh. 3 21. *are wrought in God.* Oh live above the life of ſence, yea, above the life of carnal Reaſon. If you live ſenſual lives, you are but beaſts, Pſ. 49. and many are ſo: *man that is in honour, and underſtandeth not,* 2 Cor. 3. 3. *is like the Beaſts that periſh.* And if you live onely a Life of Corrupt Reaſon, you are but men: *Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

Let ſpiritual life be of higheſt eſteem with you: And for your encouragement know this, that as you have a capacity to do ſuch excellent Things, as other men that are without this life cannot do; ſo you have a capacity for ſuch joy and delight, that other men have not. As man hath a Capacity for thoſe Delights which a Beaſt hath not; ſo a Saint hath a capacity for that joy and delight that a natural man hath not, 1 Joh. 1. 3. nor can have. He is capable of *fellowſhip with God*; *of joy* 1 Pet. 1 8. *unſpeakable and full of Glory*; and of *Peace which paſſeth all* Philip 4. 7. *underſtanding.*

2*ly.* The Doctrine is uſeful to exhort thoſe that have not yet this ſpiritual life, that are not alive again. Oh labour to be 1 Pet. 3. 7. *Heirs together of the Grace of life.* Dead bodies are loathſom things. *Abraham* could not bear the ſight of his dead Wife Pſ. 14, 3. without trouble and grief; Let me bury *my Dead out of my ſight*, Gen. 23. what then are dead Souls? they are filthy, ſtinking things.

Queſt. But wherein lyes ſpiritual death?

Anſwer. Not only in an Impotency to do good ſpiritually; but more than this, It lyes in refuſing good, and chooſing evil wilfully. Now where there is this latter, God loaths ſuch Souls; Zech. 3. 11. *my Soul loathed them, and their Soul alſo abhorred me.*

But where there is only the former, an Impotency to do good ſpiritually, God is moved to pity. *When I paſſed by thee, and ſaw thee polluted in thy own blood; I ſaid unto thee when thou* Ezec. 16. 6. *waſt in thy blood, live; yea I ſaid unto thee when thou waſt in thy blood, live;* where there is not Affected Ignorance, and wretched willfullneſs, and the ſinner doth not harden himſelf againſt God; there

there God pitieth. And consider, that Christ's terms of raising dead souls to life, are not harsh and discouraging: *Come unto me, that ye may have life. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.* John 5. Isa. 55. 3.

And suppose thou hast been long dead; yet Christ can give thee Life. He did not onely raise the Maid that lay dead in her fathers house; and the young man that was laid dead on the bier; but he also raised *Lazarus*, who had been dead and in his grave four days; Christ can raise dead Souls that have been long in the grave, unto Life: *The hour is coming, yea now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.* Matt. 9. 25. Luk 7. 14. John 11. John 5. 25.

Indeed Jesus wept, and groaned, and prayed, at his raising of *Lazarus*. Oh think of it, you that are alive, that it hath cost Jesus Christ prayers, and tears, and groans, to raise your dead Souls to life. And you that are dead, think of this, that this Life is the seeds-time of Eternity. If thou dyest spiritually dead, thou art a dead man to all Eternity: but if thou art alive to God through Jesus Christ, this is the beginning of Eternal life. So much for the former part of Verse the 24. *This my Son was dead, and is alive again.* John 11. 35, 38, 41.

CHAP. XXIX.

Sheweth, That every man by nature is a lost man: yet at his Conversion found again. From the latter part of the 24th Verse,

He was lost, and is found.

THIS variety of expressions our Saviour used, to make us the better to understand and consider the wretchedness of our natural estate, and the blessedness of a spiritual state.

And he was lost, that is in a perishing state, bound over to damnation, *John* 3. 18. And from the words above, we are parcularly taught,

Doct.

Doct. That every man in his natural condition is a loſt man, in a periſhing ſtate, bound over to damnation, none excepted, not the elect themſelves, *All we like ſheep have gone aſtray.* Before converſion they may ſay as the Apoſtle, comparing the *Jews* with the *Gentiles*; What then are we better then others? No, in no wiſe; for all are loſt, all were hewen from the ſame Rock; *Adam* was *Pauls* Root that bare him as well as *Judas*.

Iſa. 35. 6. Rom 3 9.

Matt. 18. 11. Gal. 3. 23. Eph. 2. 3. John 7. 12.

Jeſus Chriſt *came to ſeek and ſave* none but *thoſe that were loſt. The ſcripture hath concluded all under ſin.* And *we were by nature the children of wrath as well as others.* Every man in his natural ſtate may be called a man of ſin, tho not *the* man of ſin, as Antichriſt was; and a Son of Perdition, tho not *the* Son of Perdition, as *Judas* was.

I ſhall open the point in theſe three things.

Firſt, That men by nature have loſt themſelves.

Secondly, They have loſt God.

And *Thirdly*, God hath loſt them.

Firſt, We have loſt our ſelves; our eſtate of Innocency; The Divine Image after which we were made. We loſt our Divine Knowledge, Righteouſneſs, and Holineſs. We loſt our *Poſſibility* of not dying: we are irrecoverably under the ſentence of the firſt death; and by nature under the ſentence of the ſecond death; every natural man is in a periſhing condition, tho an elect veſſel; as the People of Iſrael were to confeſs of their Father *Jacob*, *A Syrian ready to periſh was my father*: firſt in his cruel ſervitude under *Laban* in *Syria*; and after he came into *Canaan*, by the Famine there: *why do you look one upon another? go down to Egypt to buy corn, leſt we die.*

Deut. 26. 5. Gen 31. 40. Gen. 42. 1, 2.

The Holy Ghoſt ſets out the loſt eſtate of men unconverted many ways; they are ſaid to *ſit in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death*; Yea, to be darkneſs it ſelf; *Ye were ſometimes darkneſs*, woful wanderers. *My ſheep wandered through all the mountains, yea, my flock was ſcattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did ſearch or ſeek them out.* And gropers: *They grope at noon-day, as in the night we grope as if we had no eyes, we ſtumble at noon-day, as in the night.* And ſo *Paul* ſpeaks of men by nature, to the Philoſophers and Learned Heathens with whom he diſputed,

Eph. 5. 8. Ezec. 34. 6. Job 5. 14. Iſa. 59. 10.

puted, that they can but feel, or grope after God by all the light of nature: *If happily they may grope after him, and find him.* That is, take notice of God in his Providences. Man hath so far lost himself, that he hath not only lost Grace, but Reason; he is in his natural state like the beasts that perish: he leads a meer sensual life. *Man being in honour abideth not, he is like the beasts that perish.* It was said of *Nebuchadnezzar*, that he had the heart of a beast.

Acts 17. 27.
Psal. 49. 12.
Dan. 4. 16.
Matt. 16. 26.
Gen. 2. 7.

Every natural man hath lost his Soul, which is of more worth than all the world; as Christ himself hath valued it. It was breathed into Man by God: and he passed it away to the Devil, when he believed the Serpent rather than God. The Prince of the power of the air is in possession of every natural mans Soul; and works mightily in him. Thus man hath lost himself wholly in his spirituals; and very much in his naturals.

Eph. 2. 2.

Secondly, Every man in his natural condition hath lost God. *He hath changed his God*; as the Prophet said the *Jews* had done. Natural men have many Gods, They *set up idols in their hearts.* Some worship the Host of Heaven; yea, the basest of Creatures, stocks and stones. *Saying to a stock Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast begotten me.* Yea some have worshipped Devils. *They sacrificed to Devils, to Gods that came newly up.* And all make their lusts their Gods: *Whose God is their belly.* Those three sorts of lusts, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are the natural mans Trinity. Carnal men have no acquaintance with God, they are strangers to him; and so far, that they are said to be *without God in the world.* Nay, they desire not to know God. *They say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* They say so in their hearts, tho not with their tongues: *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God:* he wished it, and lives at that rate as if there were none. As the Apostle saith to *Titus*, *In words they profess they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate*, or void of Judgment.

Jer. 2. 11.
Ezec. 14. 3, 4.
Eph. 1 5.
Jer. 2. 27.
Deut. 32. 17.
1 Cor. 10. 20.
Rev. 9. 20.
Rev. 2 9.
Phil. 3. 19.
1 John 2. 16.
Eph 2. 12.
Job 21. 14.
Psalm 14. 1.
2 Tit. 1. 16.

Thirdly, as natural men have lost themselves, and lost God, so God hath lost them. He calls them, *Lo-ammi, ye are not my people.* God cast off all men, upon the fall, as he did the *Jews* upon their unbelief. He drave *Adam* out of the Garden of Isr. 49 21.

Hos. 1. 9.
Rom. 11. 24.
Gen. 3. 24.
Gen. 4. 14.

of his presence, and from the Tree of Life, into the wide World. And *Cain* was driven out of his presence, and became a vagabond. The Lord may say to all men, in their natural condition, as the Church said, *I have lost my children.* God can find none of his Children in *Adam:* and therefore he begets to himself new Children in Jesus Christ, the new *Adam.*

I come now to the Reasons, why all men by nature are in a lost condition.

Reas. 1. Our Representative, in whose loins we are, was left to his choice at first, to stay with God, or leave him; and he chose the latter. He thought to mend himself, to find out a better state, and so lost that in which he was Created. It is the nature of rational Creatures, Men and Angels, to be inconstant. All left their first estate, that were left to themselves: Job 4. 18. *Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged* Gen. 49. 4. *with folly.* The nature of man is like *Reuben, Unstable as water. God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions.* God made him plain hearted, without guile, as Jesus said of Eccl. 7. 29. *Nathaniel:* but he fell presently upon making experiments of John 1. 47. his own. And now there was not so great a change, when *Lots* Wife was turned into a Pillar of Salt, as there was in man, when on a sudden he lost himself, and lost God.

Reas. 2. As mans fickleness, so his wilfulness brought, and hath kept him in his lost estate. The will is the faculty that brings all men under condemnation. God was under no blame in Hos. 13. 9. mans fall; man would do what he did: *O Israel, thy destruc-* Matt. 23. 37. *tion is of thy self. Jerusalem* would not be found; *How often* Jer. 18. 12. *would I have gathered you, and ye would not? There is no hope, say the Jews, but we will walk after our own devices.* Man is a desperate Creature, by nature, as well as the Devil. *Ahitophel* hanged himself: and so man damns himself: *why will ye die?* Ezec. 33. 11. Man will do things against the light of nature and conscience; and against all counsel and caution. Tho *Judas* was plainly told, he was the man *that should betray Christ*; and *wo be to that man that did it:* yet he desperately goes on to be *the son* Matt. 26. 24. *of perdition.*

1. USE

USE 1. This shews you what extream danger men are in whilst in a state of nature; they are lost Creatures. You know that lost or wandering sheep, above all Creatures, expose themselves to the danger of the Wolf, and other ravenous Beasts. Thus man by leaving God hath exposed himself to the greatest dangers and hazards. The Law curseth him as he goes up and down, as *Shimei* did *David*, even in his troubles. So the Law hath no pity on lost men, no not in his greatest afflictions; but still curseth him: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* And they are a prey to Woolvs in sheeps clothing. Christ told the Scribes and Pharisees, that they made their proselites *twofold more the children of Hell than themselves.*

John 10. 12. 1 Sam. 17. 34. Gal. 3. 10. Matt. 23. 15.

Every Hypocrite damns himself deep in Hell by his only appearing to be Godly. When great damnation is spoken of by Jesus Christ, it is assigned to the Devils, and to Hypocrites. Whilst a man is in his lost estate, the Devil makes a prey of him, *leads him captive at his will*: doth what he will with his heart, and affections, and conscience. As Jesus suffered the Devil to set him upon a Pinacle of the Temple, in his state of Humiliation; so natural men let the Devil hurry their thoughts, and all the powers of their Souls into dangerous places, and upon dangerous objects. And so, tho they be lost, yet *their sins find them out*, and Conscience dogs them, when God lets it loose, and becomes to them a Hell upon Earth.

Matt. 24. 25. 2 Tim. 2. 26. Matthew 4. Numb. 32.

2. This shews us what a stranger man is to himself, as well as to God; he is such a stranger to his own misery, that he sees it, he feels it not. *Ephraim had gray hairs, and knew it not.* Wicked men are *past feeling, and the God of this world hath blinded their minds. Are we blind also?* Say the *Pharisees* to Christ. *Blessed be thou of the Lord*, saith *Saul*, *I have done the commandment of the Lord. I am rich*, saith the Apostate Church, *and need nothing.* Their hearts are deceitful. They are meer dreamers, as to their condition towards God. How many men die in a dream? As some men go away in a swound. And man is wilful in all this: *We will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* How strange a thing therefore, that any man acquainted with Scripture, and the Corruption of Humane Nature, should think mans Will able and fit to determine

Hosea 7. 9. Eph. 4. 19. 2 Cor. 4. 4. John 9. 40. 1 Sam. 15. 15. Rev. 4. 17. Jer. 17. 9. Isaiah 29. Jer. 18. 12.

Gods Decree of Election, and Gods Work in Converſion. As tho man ſince the fall had a better will than in his ſtate of Innocency; whereas it is ſufficiently evident, that it is the genius of mans will in his natural ſtate, to move croſs to the Will of God. Whilſt the ceremonial Law was Gods Inſtitution, the *Jews* counted *the honourable things of his law, a ſtrange thing*; but after God had annulled it, then they were ſtiff for it, as for Circumciſion and other Ceremonial Rites.

Hoſea 8. 12.

Uſe 2. This calls men to obſerve well if they be not ſtill in the ſtate of nature. All thoſe from whom the Goſpel is hid, are certainly in a loſt and periſhing condition. *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt.* Men in a ſtate of nature may receive the Goſpel in the Letter; but if a man receive not the Goſpel in the power of it, he is in a loſt condition: *Our Goſpel came to you, not in word only, but in power.* And when the Goſpel comes to men in power, it transforms them into its likeneſs, and into the likeneſs of Chriſt. *We all with open face beholding, as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image from glory to glory.* Till thou haſt a Goſpel-Spirit and Life, and a Diſpoſition and Converſation in ſome meaſure anſwering to Jeſus Chriſt when he was here in our fleſh; the power of the Goſpel yet is hid from thee, and it is too evident thou art yet loſt.

2 Cor. 4. 3.

1 Theſſ. 1. 5.

2 Cor. 3. 18.

But when thou art come to this, to ſee and feel and bewail thy loſt condition, as the Daughters of *Iſrael* bewailed the loſs of *Jephthah*'s Daughter; This is a ſign Chriſt is ſeeking of thee: *The ſon of man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt.* They are *the ſick that need the Phyſitian.*

Judges 11.
Luke 19. 10.
Matth. 9. 12.

2. This may exhort all that are in adoubtful ſtate, to ſeek, that they may be found. When men have loſt themſelves, they will ſhout till they make ſomebody hear to direct them into their way. Thus let poor Souls that are loſt, cry to God mightily, that they may be ſought and found. Oh pray as *David* did, *Lord I have gone aſtray like a loſt ſheep, ſeek thy ſervant.* Man is not able to find his way to God, he is a bewildered Creature. If ever a Sinner be found, Chriſt

Pſalm 119.

muſt

muſt find him. God hath no more Sons to die for loſt Sinners.

Think of this, God beſtows many thoughts on loſt Sinners: *He looketh upon men, and if he ſhall ſay, I have ſinned and perverted my way:* Oh then he ſends Chriſt to ſeek and find out this loſt Sinner. Job 33. 27.

And to provoke you hereto, Conſider that it is a fooliſh thing for a man to loſe his Soul: *What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be taken from thee.* He that loſeth his Soul, loſeth God too, and Chriſt, and the ſociety of Saints and Angels for ever. The puniſhment of loſs, will be as great, if not greater, as ſome think, than that of ſenſe. *Cains* loſs, and *Sauls* loſs of the Preſence of God, was their torment, as *Abſolom's* loſs of the Kings Face was his. How do the Saints lament the loſs of Gods Face for one night? *Thou didſt hide thy face, and I was troubled.* Yea, how did Jeſus Chriſt himſelf cry out under the loſs of God? *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* He changed not his countenance at all for the cruel and ſcornful uſage he met with, after his being apprehended, and upon the Croſs; but the loſs of God made him to cry out, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Certainly, the thoughts which the damned in Hell have of Heaven, its being offered them, will increaſe their torment. Where there is pain, we point with our fingers; and ſo where there is loſs, we point with our thoughts. The memory and conception of the damned, will in all probability be enlarged, in thinking of their ſtate here on Earth, and what offers of Mercy and Grace they had here, and refuſed them: Which will infinitely encreaſe their torments: *Son, remember, that thou in thy life time receivedſt thy good things.* Matth. 16. 26. Luc. 12. 20. 2 Sam. 14. Pſal. 30. 7. Matth. 27.

Thus much for the firſt Point, That all men are in a loſt eſtate before their Converſion.

Doct. 2. Now follows the ſecond, That in Converſion a loſt Sinner is found again.

And *Firſt*, a Sinner is ſought, that he may be found, ſo are not loſt Angels. *God looketh upon men, and if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit,* Job 33.

and his life shall see the light. But lost Angels have no call to Repentance, nor offer of mercy, as man hath.

Qu. But where are lost Sinners found, when they are sought?

Ans. In as bad a place as can be out of Hell: *He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness. He is found a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls*; as you have the expressions in *Job* 30. 29. He is found a Companion of Devils, as that man *Marke* 5. *Luke* 8. and conversing with *unclean Spirits.* He is found *in his blood.* Conversion finds no man in a cleanly case: It found *Paul* persecuting the Saints. And tho Conversion do not find every Sinner so bad outwardly, yet it finds all as bad within as *Saul* was. It finds the greatest Moralist at as great a distance from God, and having as great enmity against him, as the vilest Sinner in the World.

Deut. 32. 10.

Ez. 16.

Thirdly, What is it for a Sinner to be found?

Acts 9. Acts 20.

1. To be stopped in his way and career of sinning, as *Paul* was.

2 To be brought back to God by Repentance, and to Christ by Faith. To be found in Christ, as in a new *Adam*; and so found a new man, *renewed in the spirit of his mind.* And in a new Covenant with God. The Conversion of a Sinner hath all this in it.

Fourthly, Who finds the lost Sinner? He is not able to find his way back to God, no more than a wandering Sheep can find its way home. A lost Sinner is in this respect a silly creature; he must be sought. And God is so tender of him, and so willing that he should return to him, that he himself provides one to seek and find him. *I have found a ransom.* Where? In his own bosom, by consultation with himself: It is his own Invention; he hath found a way to satisfie himself, and save Sinners too. *Darius* sought to find a Ransom for *Daniel*, but could not. But God hath found a Ransom. The *Hebrew* word signifieth *a covering*, typified by the Mercy-Seat that covered the Ark where the Law was, that curseth every Sinner out of Christ. If Men and Angels had sate in Councel to this day, they could not have found a Ransom for lost Sinners: they may say, as in *Job*, all the Creatures said of Wisdom, *It is not in us.* Angels desire to look into this thing, as

Job 33. 24.

Dan. 6. 15.

Exod. 25. 21.

as being worth their wonder: Which was ſhadowed by the Cherubims looking down on the Mercy-Seat: There is Myſtery enough in it, for Angels to admire: *Without controverſie great is the myſtery of godlineſs ——— ſeen of Angels.* 1 Pet. 1. 12. Exod. 25. 20. 1 Tm. 3. 16.

Queſt. And who is the ranſom that God hath provided for loſt ſinners, to find them, and bring them home to him?

Anſw. Jeſus Chriſt, and only He: There is none joined with him herein: *I alone, and of the people there was none with me. There is no name under heaven by which we can be ſaved, but by the name of Jeſus. The Son of man is come to ſave that which was loſt.* One *Adam* loſt all, and another muſt find all that are found. And Jeſus Chriſt doth three things in ſeeking and recovering loſt ſinners. Iſa 63. 3. Acts 4. Matth. 18. 11. Luke 19. 10.

1. He pays a ranſom to God for them: Therefore God ſaith, *I have found a ranſom.* Gods Juſtice muſt be ſatisfied, as well as his mercy glorified: There muſt be Blood, precious Blood, even the Blood of Chriſt to ranſom ſinners. 1 Pet. 1. 19.

2. Chriſt prays, as well as pays, before he finds and recovers loſt ſinners, *I pray for them alſo, that ſhall believe in me through their word.* Thoſe other ſheep that are yet ſtraying, *I pray for them, that they may be one with us.* And his prayer can do that which *Noahs*, *Daniels*, and *Joels* could not do, nor the prayers of *Moſes* and *Samuel*. John 17. 20. John 10. 16. Ez 14. 14. Jer. 15. 1.

3. After both theſe, he is fain to reſcue every ſinner by power; he recovers them from the power of Satan, as David did his Fathers Lamb, from the Bear and the Lyon. Acts 26. 18. 1 Sam. 17 34.

USE 1. This ſhould teach us to wonder at the care of God and Chriſt about loſt ſinners. Obſerve that, in *Iſa.* 65. 1. *I am found of them that ſought me not.* Chriſt is the ſeeker, and not the ſinner: *I ſaid, behold me, behold me, to a nation that was not called by name.* Chriſts ſeeking and finding out a loſt ſinner is a wonderful thing; and it is our ſtupidity that we do not admire and contemplate it more. There are all dimenſions of love and tenderneſs in it; *breadth and length, and depth and height.* Oh you that were loſt, admire and wonder at it, that ever you ſhould be found. Eph. 3. 18.

Uſe 2. Examine whether you are found or not: All were loſt; *All we have gone aſtray*; if Chriſt have found you, then you are his, *Thou gaveſt them me*, ſaith Chriſt to his Father: and they Iſa. 53. 6. John 17. 16.

Gal. 5. 24. they that are Christs, *have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* They will crucifie that, for which he was crucified: If you are Christs, you will put that sin which remains in you, to open shame, as your sins did Christ; you will complain of it to God, as the vilest thing in the world, and you will loath your selves for it; you will be gradually putting sin to death; as the Lord drove the Nations out before *Israel.* If Christ
Deut. 7. 22. have sought and found you, you are his sheep; you were wandring sheep before, but now you are his: And saith he, *My*
John 10. 27. *sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.* The sheep follow the Lamb: If Christ have found you, you tread in his steps; you
1 Pet. 2 21. are *Imitators of Christ*, and have a desire, to do whatever he
1 Cor. 11. 1. bids you.
John 2. 5. 3. Take heed of losing your selves again: It is true, when you are once found, you cannot be utterly lost again: If you should, Christ would not discharge his undertaking; But he will do this, *Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none*
John 17. 12. *of them is lost, but the son of perdition.* And, *This is the Fa-*
John 6. 39. *thers will, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing.* Christ keeps them, and he prays his Father to keep them. Yet
John 17. 11. you may lose Christ, and be lost in part, and for a time. The Spouse lost her beloved, *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.* Tho you may not lose
Cant. 5. 6. your right to Christ; *Who shall seperate us from the love of Christ?*
Rom. 8. 35, 36. Yet you may lose your sight of Christ; and it may cost you dear to find him again: *I sought him, but I found him not; I called him, but he gave me no answer.* If you carelesly lose the
Cant. 3. 1; sight of Christ, you may have a sorrowful seeking of him; as
Cant. 5. 6. his Father and Mother had: My Brethren, take heed of *losing*
Luke 2. 48. *the things that ye have wrought, of leaving your first love* to
Rev. 2. 4. Christ, and the things of Christ; however God will heal your
Hos. 13. 4. backslidings, yet it may be by a smarting plaister.

And if you would not wander in your hearts or ways,

1. Make the Scriptures your boundaries, and let them speak their own sense: *Ye err*, saith Christ, *not knowing the Scriptures.*

Matth. 22. 29. 2. Abase your own righteousness, and exalt the righteousness
Phil. 3. 8, 9. of Christ; this is the way to be found in him; God will never find you in Christ, so long as you are exalters of your own Righteousness.

3. Get

3. Get and keep under the teaching and leading Office of the Spirit, as it is the promiſe of the Father, and the Son: *He ſhall lead you into all truth; and he ſhall teach you all things.* John 16. 13. & 14. 26. Thus I have finiſhed this part of the Parable, containing the tranſaction betwixt the Father and the younger Son.

CHAP. XXX.

Giveth the Explication of the 25th and 26th Verſes, and the Doctrines thence ariſing.

V. 25. *Now his elder ſon was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the houſe, he heard muſick and dancing.*
V. 26. *And he called one of the ſervants, and asked what theſe things meant?*

I Come now to the laſt part of this famous Parable, namely, the Elder Sons, which he acts in an envious diſtaſte of his younger Brothers great Entertainment. Firſt, with a ſervant of the houſe in theſe two Verſes, and afterwards with his Father.

Now his elder Son, &c. That is, In general, the *Jewiſh* Nation; *I am a Father to Iſrael, and Ephraim is my firſt-born.* Jer. 3. 9. But particularly, the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who were men of the greateſt remark and note amongſt the *Jews*; Theſe were the men that murmured at Jeſus Chriſt for receiving ſinners, and eating with them. Chriſts affable deportment towards repenting *Publicans* and ſinners, was a great offence to the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. Now both the Younger and Elder Son, are the Type of natural men; yet with this great difference; the younger Son is the repeſentative of thoſe that repent; the Elder of thoſe who are ſo conceited of themſelves, as to think they need no repentance; ſo that the younger Son hath the preheminence. Luc. 15. 2. Luc. 15. 7.

Now his Elder Son was in the field: He was abſent at his brothers return and entertainment by his Father. Abſence from ſeaſons of Grace, is of evil conſequence. *Thomas* was abſent Doct. John 20. 24.

ſent when Jeſus firſt appeared to his Diſciples after his Reſurrection. The occaſion of his ablence, and whether juſtifiable or no, is not written; but the inconvenience he ſuffered by it is he was the hardeſt of belief, *Except I ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe.* v. 25.

It was a blot Chriſt hath left ſticking on *Martha* that her younger Siſter *Mary* made the better choice, even *that good part, that ſhould not be taken from her.* And how came it about? *Martha was cumbred about much ſerving,* whilſt *Mary ſat at Jeſus his feet. All his Saints ſit down at his feet to receive of his words.* Saints are bred up at the feet of God, as *Paul* was at *Gamaliels.* The Spouſe brought upon her ſelf much grief and ſorrow in ſlighting the opportunity that was offered her for Communion with Chriſt; *Open to me, my ſiſter, my love*; ſaith Chriſt; *I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?* ſaith the Spouſe. But what ſaith ſhe next? *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himſelf and was gone; I ſought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no anſwer.* Oh therefore, watch the diſpenſations and ſeaſons of Grace; as the infirm people did the ſeaſons of the Angels troubling the water: You have worſe infirmities than they had. Watch for the ſpirits moving upon ſeaſons of Grace for your healing; fear and tremble at thoſe words of Chriſt, *If thou hadſt known, even thou at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Luc. 10. 41, 42. v. 39, 40. Deut. 33. 3. Cant. 5. 2, 3. v. 6. John 5. Luc. 19.

Now his elder Son was in the field: A place of work, he had been buſie at work there, not meditating or praying, as *Iſaac.* The *Phariſees* did not uſe to pray alone, but before men, in the Synagogues and ſtreets, that they might be ſeen: He was in the field at work.

Gen. 24. Matthew 6. 5.

Doct. The confidence of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* was in their works; and ſo is every mans naturally.

The *Jews* looked on themſelves as under the covenant of works, and they were for Juſtification by their own works, by the works of the law: *Good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do that I may have eternal life?* They ſought Righteouſneſs by ths works of the Law: Juſtification by faith in anothers Righteouſneſs, was a new and a ſtrange Doctrine to the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*: Many men that have ſo much Religion, as to mind another world, and ſeek after Heaven, as he did, *Matth.* 19.

Matth. 19 16. Rom. 9. 32.

19. Yet they commonly seek it only by works. They look more to their own purchase of Heaven, than to Christ. *They trust to themselves that they are righteous.* As *Naaman* valued the Rivers of *Damascus*, above the Waters of *Israel*; so do natural men their own works above Christ. They look on Righteousness by Faith in Christ as a meer Notion; and bring down Religion, and the Mysteries of the Scriptures, to the censure of carnal Reason. They would not have Heaven as [illegible] but for their price, as that Jesuit said, *Cœlum gratis non accipiam*: I will have Heaven for my Money. It is true, Heaven is the purchase of Christ. But it is a free-gift to us: *The gift of God is eternal life.* It hath been, and is a great design of the Devil, and the man of sin; and I may add, of *Socinians*, and others of their Spirit; I say, it is a design which these drive on, to have men as little beholden to Christ for Salvation, as may be. Something of self, is the Idol that these men set up in their hearts: they cannot bear self-denial to follow Christ. His imputed Righteousness, is either babling, as *Pauls* discourse of Jesus and the Resurrection was to the learned Philosophers; or a Riddle, as Christ's words usually were to the *Jews*.

Luc 18. 9. 2 Kings 2. 5. *Vega.* Eph. 1. 14. Rom. 6. 23. Acts 17. 18.

The *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and their Heirs, and Allyes, to this day, would have something or other in themselves, to commend them to God, without Christ; or at least to be joined with him. This is the Pride of mans heart, he is so proud a creature, that he would *be as God. Vain man, as Zopher said, would be wise*: That is, wise as God. That was the drift of man in eating of the Forbidden Fruit.

Gen. 3. Job 11. 12.

But if men can save themselves, God might have spared Christ; Christ, as St *Paul* saith in another case, then died in vain, and our faith is vain. It may then be said of his death and sufferings, as *Judas* did of *Marys* Box of Oyntment, *To what purpose is this waste?* Men that Proudly think this, they do in effect tell Jesus Christ, he might have kept his kindness to himself.

Cor. 1. 15.

Alas! if these men had any experience of the burden of sin, and of a wounded conscience, they would then see they must inevitably perish without the Death and Righteousness of Christ. *O that I may be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness*, would be their Language, as well as *Pauls*.

Philip 3. 9.

Paul was once as great a doter on self-righteousness as any, till he came to be a convicted and condemned person by the Law:

Rom. 7. 9. *I was once alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died:* O then for Christs Righteousness, for *the righteousness of God, which is through faith in Christ.* It is true, the Gospel would have them that believe, *to maintain*

Tit. 3. 14. *good works*; to be fruitful; *for faith without works is dead*; but

James 2. 26. tho the Apostle would have them to have works to justifie their Faith; yet not to justifie their persons; he doth not commend works to them for merit, but for duty. If the former, they would take Christs office out of his hands. Never any merited but Christ. But these men can overlook that of our

Luke 17. 9,10. Saviour. *Doth th master thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not: so likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which is our duty.* Christ foresaw, that these men would be opening Heaven with the old Key, tho God had set on a new Lock. God hath made *a new way to the holy of holies.*

Heb. 10 20. My brethren, I beseech you beware of this Leaven of the *Pharisees*; and mind you the Covenant of Grace. This will put you upon good works, as well as the Covenant of Works: not in your justification, but that which ever accompanies it, your Sanctification; the Covenant of Grace is conducing, as to your greatest comfort, so to your greatest Holiness: It

Eze. 36. 26. *writes the law of God in your hearts, and causeth you to walk in his statutes.*

It then follows; *And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.*

These ceremonies were used in those countries at their solemn Feasts; so that the words hold forth, that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* heard the glad tidings of the Gospel which Jesus Christ Preached to repenting and believing sinners.

And thus Christ sets forth the offers of himself, his Grace, and Pardon to the *Jews*: *we have piped to you, and ye have not*

Matt. 11. 17. *danced*: you have rejected my offers of Pardon and Salvation upon your Repentance, and believing in me. And as the *Jews* heard Christ, and his Gospel-Invitations; so all the Nations of the World have heard this Musick and Dancing, or shall do it.

And

And he called one of the ſervants, and asked what theſe things meant. Here we ſee, that though they heard, yet they did not underſtand Chriſt's offers of Goſpel Grace. And this was Gods great Judgment upon that People, prophecied of: *In them is fullfiled the prophecy of Iſaiah, which ſaith, hearing they ſhall hear, and ſhall not underſtand.* Chriſt in his Miniſtry was a *Barbarian* to them; as St. *Paul* ſpeaks of thoſe that uſed an unknown tongue in the Church. Iſa. 6. 9. Matt. 13. 14.

And he called one of the ſervants, and asked what theſe things meant. It may be, that *John* the Baptiſt is here intended: for we find the *Phariſees* enquired much of him, and asked him many queſtions about himſelf, and Chriſt. The *Jews* ſent Prieſts and Levites from *Jeruſalem*, to ask *John whether he was the Chriſt?* This was but to make way, to ſift him about Chriſt and his Doctrine: and theſe were of the *Phariſees*. And ſo they often asked Chriſt himſelf queſtions; but uſually in a way of temptation, as when they asked a Sign. And the Devil in the Serpent began this way of asking queſtions; *Hath God ſaid, ye ſhall not eat of every tree of the garden?* And if any of them did at any time ask a queſtion of Chriſt ſeriouſly, as he did, *Good maſter, what good thing muſt I do, that I may have eternal life?* Yet Chriſts anſwers never pleaſed them: it is ſaid of that man, *that he went away ſorrowful.* 1 Cor. 14. 11. John 1. 19. v. 24. Marke 8. 11. Geu. 3. 1. Matt 19.

Doct. And this ſhews us plainly, that whatever fair pretences natural men make of their believing in Chriſt, and loving him, and depending upon his prophetical office; yet they do it no further than ſuits with their own humour and intereſt. For when the word and will of Chriſt comes to pinch them, as they did this man, they ſay as thoſe in *John*, *This is an hard ſaying, who can bear it?* No natural man doth, or can deſire affectionately and ſincerely to conform himſelf to the whole will of Chriſt. There goes ſo much ſelf-denial to this, as no natural man in the world hath. Oh what fair ſhews many make of love, and obedience to Chriſt, and ſubjection to his word; and yet when any thing comes to the quick, and puts them upon ſelf-denial, they flinch and go off from him. John 6. 60.

And asked what theſe things meant. From whence we may further obſerve.

Doct. That natural men, of the greateſt parts and ſeeming

piety (such were the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*), are notwithstanding strangers to the transactions betwixt God and repenting sinners.

This Elder Son knew his Brother to be a Prodigal, but not a Convert; he knew his sins, but not his Grace: Such men know not by any experience, what a sinners conversion to God means, what his Reconciliation to God means; they are quite ignorant of the marvellous interview, and dear Embraces, that usually pass betwixt God and men in their Conversion. They have heard of him by the ear, but they cannot say as *Job*, that their eyes have seen him: They have no humble and holy converse with him, as this returning Prodigal had with his Father. The most refined and accomplished Moralists are strangers to the things of the Spirit of God in a sinners conversion, and reception into Grace and Favour with God by Jesus Christ: *A natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him.* 1 Cor. 2. 14. They seem to be nonsence to him, as Regeneration did to *Nicodemus*; *Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* John 3. The Mysteries of free Grace in Gods saving sinners, must be seen by another eye than any natural man hath; none see them, but they to whom the Spirit shews them: *He shall glorifie me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.* John 16. 14. Till *Nicodemus* was himself regenerated, he talked most absurdly of Regeneration: So did those Philosophers that would dispute with *Paul* about the Resurrection: And this is the reason that the best of natural men look so coyly on sinners, that pass through the work of Conversion: So did the *Jews* on *Paul* after his Conversion, they looked on him as a monster, not fit to live amongst men. Act 17. So they did on *Isaiah* and his Converts, *Behold I and the children that thou hast given me, are for signs, and for wonders in Israel.* Acts 22. 23. Isa. 8. 18. In *Israel*, those who were the people of God by profession.

Application. O therefore, bless God, bless him from your souls; if you have any experimental knowledg of those blessed transactions that pass betwixt God and poor sinners in their Conversion; and can bear witness, that these things are not notions and fancies, but reallities and great truths; if you can say as he did to the *Pharisees*, *One thing I know, that whereas* John 9. 25.

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I was blind, now I see. O the power of Grace that makes such a sensible change in a sinners conversion! And oh the sweet joy that God takes in a Convert, and he in God! The Prodigal is a special instance of this; the Father as soon as ever he came at him, fell on his neck and kissed him: And so was *Paul*, who spake such seraphical Language of his Conversion, as made *Festus* think him besides himself. O bless and admire God for his Grace to you, and in you, for your experimental knowledg in these mysterious transactions, that pass betwixt God, and Christ, and sinners in their conversion; such as are brought *out of darkness into marvellous light.* It is true, every sinners conversion is not with such observation and remark as of some. There was great difference herein betwixt *Paul* and the other Apostles. Christ called these with a still voice; he did but say, *Follow me*, and the work was done. But *Pauls* Conversion was with thunder and lightning.

v. 7, 10.

Acts 25. 24.

1 Pet. 2. 9.

Acts 9 3.

But in all Converts, the change that is wrought both in respect of the state they leave, and that into which they are brought, is very wonderful to themselves, and for the most part begets in them a wondrous peace and joy, *Peace which passeth all understanding*, and joy which strangers intermeddle not with. So much for this Verse.

CHAP. XXXI.

Sheweth, That Gods Gospel-Dispensations are full of Reason. From the 27th Verse.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

HERE the Servant tells the Elder Son the reason of the Musick and Dancing, the great joy which he heard; and it was, because of the safe return of his younger Brother. From whence observe,

Doct.

D. A. That there is good reason there should be great rejoicing at a sinners conversion; And so saith the Father also to his Elder Son, *v*, 22. *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad.* Joy in Heaven, and joy in the presence of the Angels of God, is upon this account a very agreeable thing. But of this, having already spoken of in Chap. 23. I shall here add this further Consideration,

That tho Gods Gospel-Dispensations are a great Mystery; yet they are also full of Reason; they are extreme reasonable; as the Apostle calls the Saints offering their bodies as a living Sacrifice to God, *their reasonable service.* And that they are so, is manifest in the conspiring and agreement of the Divine Attributes herein: As his Will, *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.* And his Will is full of Reason: *Voluntas Dei, est ratio rationum*; his Will is his Reason, and the highest reason; and therefore he is said by Saint *Paul*, *To work all things after the counsel of his own will.* And so his will is the rule of his actions; they still run *according to the good pleasure of his will.* And his will is the rule of Christs actions, *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* And it is the rule that the rational creature is to act by, both Angels and men, *I come to do thy will, O God.*

1 Tim. 3. 16. Rom. 12. 1. Rom. 9. 18. Eph. 1 11. Eph. 2. 5, 1. Joh. 6. 38. Psal. 103. 20. Psal. 40. 8.

And as the Will of God is notified in all his Gospel-Dispensations; so is his Wisdom, not only inferrible from his Will, but expresly declared. Therefore Jesus Christ is called *Wisdom*, Prov. 8 5. And the Gospel of Christ and his Grace is called the *Wisdom of God.* It was impossible that it should have been contrived by any Wisdom beneath the Wisdom of God. Angels could not have devised it; it is a mystery to them as well as to us.

1 Cor. 1. 24. 1 Pet. 1. 12.

And it is the product of Gods Power; and is therefore called *the power of God.* The pardoning of sin, requires the Power of God; *Let the power of my Lord be great, in pardoning the iniquity of this people.* And where as it is said, *That the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sin*, We know that he is also God. And the Justice of God, doth also bear its part in his Gospel Dispensations: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins.* There is Justice in the Salvation of some sinners, as in the Damnation of others: that is, justice as

1 Cor. 1. 24. Numb. 14. 17. matth. 9. 6. 1 John 1. 9.

to

to Christ, tho free Grace as to us: *Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me.* 2 Tim. 4.

Hence let us apprehend good reason for our rejoycing at the conversion of any sinner. Let us learn, not think it strange, that the greatest sinner should obtain Mercy and Grace: *Paul* did, tho a Persecutor and a Blasphemer. We may not think that such a nonsuch for wickedness, as *Manasseh* was; or such a cruel Persecutor as *Paul* was, who was mad in Persecuting the Church, that such a sinner is past mercy. *I obtained mercy* saith *Paul*. God *will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.* 1 Tim. 1. 13. Rom. 9. 18. All the sons of God shouted for joy at the first Creation; and all Saints should do the like at Gods making a new Creature. Job 38. 7. The first Creation was finished in six days; but the making of the new Creature will be a work that will last to the end of the world.

Secondly, We may here also see, that there is reason for us to grieve at sinners, who refuse the offers of the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel; who *neglect so great salvation*, and *reject eternal life*. The wilfulness of sinners against the gracious offers of Christ, was a great grief to him. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not:* They were words from his heart. And so *Luke* 19. 41. *And when he came nigh to the city, he wept over it*, &c. Heb. 2. 2. Acts 13. 46. Matt. 23. 37.

Thirdly, Learn from hence, Never to let any of Gods Dispensations under the Gospel, to be an offence to you. We see there is reason, the highest reason in all. Let us neither be offended at the persons converted, tho they have been such sad persecutors and blasphemers, as *Paul* was; nor at the time of their conversion, tho it be but a little before their death, as that malefactors was, *Luke* 23. Nor at Gods leaving sin to dwell in us after our conversion, when we are in a state of Grace, to make such lamentable work as it doth. Nor at the sore temptations and desertions of Saints, and eminent Servants of God, as *Pauls thorn in the flesh*. Nor at the long and hard sufferings of the Church of God by the World. We should not be offended at any of Gods Dispensations under the Gospel: for as there is great mystery, so there is great reason in all. There is no absurdity in any of them; but there is a τὸ πρέπον, a decency and agreeableness in them all. It is true, Rom. 7. 2 Cor. 12.

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this may lie under cover, and as it were, within the vail for a time, as the Kings Daughter did: but it will at laſt break out from under the Clouds, as the Sun. There are many abſurd men; but there can be no abſurdity in any thing that God doth to ſinners, or Saints. The Diſciples were puzled at firſt with Chriſts ſaying, *We cannot tell what he ſaith:* but anon, they ſay, *now ſpeakeſt thou plainly, and ſpeakeſt no proverb?* And ſo ſhall we be able to do in the darkeſt diſpenſations, if we wait on God in the way of our duty. After a while, the vail ſhall be taken off, and we ſhall ſee as with open face, not only the myſtery, but the reaſon, and the ſymmetry of them all.

Pſal. 45. 2 Theſ. 3. 2.

John 16. 18. v. 29.

CHAP. XXXII.

Which ſheweth, that meer Moraliſts, do commonly both envy the Grace of God to others, and refuſe it themſelves. From the firſt part of the 28. *Verſe.*

And he was angry, and would not go in.

HERE is the ſpirit of a *Scribe*, or *Phariſee*; that is, a *Hypocrite:* this is the temper of a meer outwardly Righteous and Religious man.

1. He diſtaſtes and envies his Brothers obtaining the favour and entertainment which himſelf had not.

2. He refuſeth and rejects the ſame, when offered to himſelf. So that here are two points to be ſpoken to.

Doct. Firſt, That ſeemingly Righteous and Religious Men, diſtaſte and envy Gods receiving of greater ſinners than themſelves, unto Grace and Mercy. *And he was angry.* At what? at his Fathers receiving his Prodigal Brother, ſo great a ſinner, with ſuch great joy. As it is ſaid of that *Cedar* repreſenting the *Syrian Monarch*, which God had made ſo great; *That all the trees in the garden of God envied him*: ſo is a ſinner when he comes to himſelf, and returns to God; he now becomes the envy of meer Moral and ſeemingly Religious Men: that one who

Ezec. 31. 9.

who had been a noted ſinner, ſhould be more in favour with God than themſelves. When the *Phariſees* ſaw *Jeſus* uſe a gracious affableneſs towards *Publicans* and *Sinners* that followed him, they were vexed at it. And therefore they could not forbear to ask his Diſciples, why their Maſter was ſo familiar with *Publicans* and *Sinners*? why more than with them? but Chriſt replied upon them, for his Diſciples, *The whole need not a phyſician, but thoſe that are ſick: I came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance*: ſenſible ſinners. Theſe *Publicans* and *Sinners* were ſenſible of their loſt condition, and they fly to Chriſt as their Sanctuary, and City of Refuge. Matt. 9. 11, 12

Thus alſo we find, when the *Jews* ſaw *Paul* and *Barnabas* offer the word of Grace to the *Gentiles*, and the *Gentiles* eagerly thronging after them: it is ſaid. *They were filed with envy, contradicting, and blaſpheming, and ſtirred up devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city to perſecute them* Obſerve how envious the devout *Jews* were againſt the *Gentiles*, their being partakers of the Grace of God. They looked upon them as great Sinners, and wonderfully below them, and ſo they thought of all that were below them in morality, and ceremonies; and therefore did not ſpare to call Chriſt himſelf a Sinner. *We know this man is a ſinner*, and a Glutton, and Wine-bibber, a friend to Publicans and Sinners. Acts. 13. 45. John 9. 24. Matth. 11. 19.

Thoſe amongſt the *Jews* that were ſtrict, and that built upon their own righteouſneſs, they were ſo rigid to others whom they thought greater Sinners than themſelves, that they meaſured Gods Mercy towards them by the *Sinaical* Covenant, as they called it, the Covenant he made at Mount *Sinai*; and conceived, that this pardoned only little ſins, and left no place of Repentance and Pardon for great Sinners; as ſome Felons, according to our Law, are not allowed their Clergy.

But then, how came *David* to be pardoned his great ſins? They find out ſhifts to excuſe *David* from the guilt both of Adultery and Murder. From Adultery, becauſe *Bathſheba's* Husband was in War; and from Murder, becauſe *David* being a King, had a power over *Uriah's* Life. But if ſo, why then did the Lord ſo ſeverely puniſh *David* for both, as we ſee he did? All thoſe threatnings againſt him and his houſe, for thoſe ſins were executed. For the threatnings God denounceth 2 Sam. 12.

nounceth againſt Sinners, are not as Almanacks, that ſay on ſuch days will be Rain, and on ſuch days Froſt and Snow, and commonly it is not ſo; but like ſad and more fatal Comets: *Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and no one of theſe have failed*: That is, theſe Judgments that were threatned.

Iſa. 34. 16.

It was the malignant Spirit of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, that they would not have great Sinners, as they called them, to have any Indulgence or Mercy from God. *Beza* ſpeaks of ſome perſons that uſed to twit him with the ſins of his unregenerate ſtate: *Invident mihi gratiam Divinam*: They envy me the Grace of God.

Neither is this malignancy only againſt the Perſons receiving the Grace of God; but alſo againſt the Grace of God it ſelf. And that becauſe this Grace is an enemy to ſelf Righteouſneſs, and ſelf Opinion, Rom. 11. 6. *If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwiſe grace is no more grace.* The Grace of the Goſpel hath found enemies in all ages ſince the preaching of it to the World. At firſt, The *Pelagians*, after the *Semipelagian*, *Socinians*, *Arminians*, and *Papiſts*; and indeed Moral men, and all meer Moraliſts have had, and have a great prejudice againſt free Grace, the Grace of God by Chriſt Jeſus, becauſe it puts them upon ſelf-denial; upon denying their own righteouſneſs as well as their ſins, which they cannot bear. There is a Jewiſh Spirit in theſe men: *Who going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs*, do not, neither can ſubmit themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God.

Rom. 10. 3.

The Grace of God hides pride from man; the doing of this, is one of Gods great deſigns in the Goſpel, and it excludes boaſting, and is an enemy to heart-luſts, as well as the Law. *I had not known luſt, except the law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not covet.* The Grace of the Goſpel *caſts down imaginations*, or ſinful reaſonings, and it *brings into captivity every thought*, every proud and ſinful thought. The Grace of God allows not men to entertain a thought in their heart, that will not bear the eye of Chriſt. And this the ſtricteſt Moraliſt, who is no more, cannot bear. Theſe, tho ſevere outwardly, yet will have liberty to be looſe within; *they make clean the outſide, but within is rottenneſs.* Theſe men like the Doctrine of *Rome* very well, *Concupiſcentia in Renatis, non eſt peccatum.* Concupiſcence

Rom. 3 27.
Rom. 7. 7.

John 2. 25.
Matth. 23.

piſcence in the Regenerate is no Sin: according to that common, but fooliſh and wicked ſaying, Thoughts are free.

But the Government of Goſpel-Grace is exerciſed as much within doors, as without. As Chriſt ſaid to the *Jews* in another caſe, *The kingdom of God is within you.* And as the Apoſtle ſaith, *He is a Jew that is one inwardly.* Luke 17. 21. Rom. 2. 28.

Again, Theſe kind of men are offended at Gods manner of diſpenſing his Grace; they fret and chafe at God himſelf, as well as his Grace, as thoſe Labourers did at the Husbandman. *Theſe have wrought but one hour, and thou haſt made them equal to us that have born the heat of the day.* Who is this they quarrel with? The good man of the houſe, who in this Parable is Gods Repreſentative. The nature of man ſince the fall, is impudent, and quarrelſom with God himſelf, even ſo far, as to charge him: *The woman which thou gaveſt me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* His heart fretteth againſt many of Gods diſpenſations of Grace. When God ſaith, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy:* The carnal man ſaith, *Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath reſiſted his will?* As ſore Eyes cannot bear the light of the Sun, ſo unſound hearts cannot bear the manner of Gods diſpenſing his Grace, they cannot bear his freedom herein. Man likes not of many things that God doth. As *Alfonſus* King of *Spain*, had the confidence to ſay, That if he had been at the Creation, he would have ordered ſome things better. Mat. 20. 11, 12. Gen. 3. 12. Rom. 9. 18. Rom. 9. 19.

The Preacher ſaith, *Eccl.* 7. 14. That God doth ſo diſpoſe of things, *that man ſhould find nothing after him.* Man cannot mend what God makes; and yet theſe men in the pride of their hearts, and ſelf-conceit, imagine that they can order the work of Salvation, and the pardon of ſin, better than God hath done.

Uſe. Oh take heed of this Spirit, which, notwithſtanding the ſeeming Devotion and ſtrictneſs of ſuch men, is damnable. The Holy Ghoſt makes this the property of wicked men, that they are grieved and gnaſh their Teeth at the godly, when God doth them any honour; as *Haman* did at *Mordecai.* For men to complain of Gods way of diſpenſing his Grace, is by interpretation, to make themſelves juſter and wiſer than God. The Woman thought to be as wiſe as God, but ſhe learned this proud thought from the Devil, and ſo do all men Pſal. 112. 10.

that have it. Such men would have their own will to think and talk, and do as they lift; and yet will not let God have his, nor *do what he will with his own.* But a man that hath true Grace, an humble man, he will think it reaſon enough, that it is Gods pleaſure to do what he doth, as to paſs by the more likely, and chuſe the more unlikely. This was enough to Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, who, as man, was a Perſon of the higheſt reaſon, yet was ſo far from being offended at God in this caſe, that he gave him thanks for it: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and revealed them unto babes; even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.* If Princes have their *Arcana Imperii*; how much more ſhould we adore thoſe of the Great God? who as he *connot lye*, Heb. 6. ſo he cannot be unjuſt, or oppreſs, nor be called to an account, Job 33. *He giveth not account of any of his matters.* He hath hid the Myſteries of the Goſpel from many Ages and Generations; and in theſe latter days hath revealed them to his Saints; and who may ſay, what doſt thou? It is ſurely beſt and ſafeſt for theſe men to turn their envious and angry pieks at Gods methods, into reverend Admirations, as *Paul* did at his caſting off the *Jews*, and receiving in the *Gentiles* to the Grace of the Goſpel: *O the depths of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledg of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!*

Matth. 20. 15.

Col. 1 26.

Rom. 11 33.

And to move you further to it, Conſider, *Firſt*, That this kind of Envy is natural to man: *The ſpirit that dwelleth in us luſteth to envy.* The ten Diſciples envyed the two, about preheminence in Chriſts Kingdom. For this ſin, the Apoſtles in moſt of their Epiſtles rebuked many of the Chriſtians to whom they wrote. Now that ſin that is ſo natural to all men, that which every man may call *his iniquity, and the ſin that doth ſo eaſily beſet him*, we ſhould labour the more to mortifie. It will hold you hard to it, as ſome of the *Canaanites* did *Iſrael*; but the more you diſlike it, and reſiſt it, the weaker you will find it.

Jam. 4 5.
Matth. 20. 24.
Gal 5. 26.
2 Cor. 12. 20.
Jam. 3. 14.
1 Pet. 2. 1.
Heb. 12.

Secondly, Envy is a ſtrange ſin, tho it be natural. It is the depreſſion or caſting down of a mans Soul, at the exaltation of another, which at all times, is baſe; but here ſo much the more, in regard that what is done, is Gods act. He gives five

Talents

Talents to one, and but two to another, and but one to another. Remember what God ſaith in this caſe: *Is thine eye evil, becauſe I am good?* Matth. 20. 15. Envy is a diſeaſe catched at anothers health; a ſtrange way of Infection!

3. Angels do not envy the Preheminence of our nature above theirs, *Heb.* 2. 16. Their nature is without envy; they glorifie God for our Reconciliation to him by Chriſt, in our nature, not theirs, *Luke* 2 14. There is no envy in Heaven. So free is the Angelical Nature from envy at us, that they are affected at the advancement of our Nature by Chriſt; they love us the better for this, and are great friends to thoſe that are in Chriſt. Heb. 1. 16.

O, labour for this Angelical Diſpoſition, to be well pleaſed with the Grace of God; how and whereſoever it pleaſeth him to diſpence it. So were the believing *Jews* with the Grace of God to the *Gentiles*, *They glorified God, ſaying, Then hath God alſo to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life?* How did *Paul* Glory in the Faith and Obedience of the *Romans?* And in the Love, and Patience, and Hope, of the *Theſſalonians?* And in the Charity of the *Macedonians?* Rom. 1. 8 16. 19. 1 Theſ. 1. 3. 2 Cor. 8. 2.

Such a diſpoſition as this, is a great bleſſing amongſt thoſe *ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in Chriſt.* We have the advantage of other mens grace, as well as our own: take away envy, and what is mine, that is not thine? and what is thine, that is not mine? But the man that is envious at the Grace of God to others, ſtands full in his own light: he cannot *enjoy his own mercy:* muchleſs the benefits which would otherwiſe accrue to him from the Grace of God in others. Eph. 2. 3. Jouah 2.

Joſeph knew why he made *Benjamins* Meſs five times as much as his Brethrens, tho his Brethren knew it not, till afterwards. Chriſt ſaid to *Peter*, *What I do, thou knoweſt not now, but thou ſhalt know hereafter.* Conſider, God hath never the leſs Grace for thee, when he gives never ſo much to the greateſt of ſinners, ſuch as this Prodigal was. As the Sun gives not the leſs light to thee, tho it gives light to the whole world. A Goſpel-Spirit is conſtituted of Self-denying, and God-admiring and praiſing thoughts, with reſpect to his freedom in diſpencing his Grace to the World. This was Chriſts own Spirit. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and* John 13. 7. Matt. 11. 25.

prudent,

prudent, and haſt reveal'd them unto babes; even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.

So much for the firſt clauſe of the 28th Verſe, *And he was angry.* It follows, *and would not go in.* That is, to the joyful entertainment of his Brother. Whence we may obſerve,

2. *Doct.* That many of the ſtricteſt Moraliſts and ſeemingly Religious Men, refuſe the Grace and Mercy of the Goſpel when offered to them.

Such were, and ſo did the *Scribes* and *Phariſees.* Chriſt was to come of the *Jews*, and the *Jews* were firſt invited to him, and Mercy and Grace by him: *It was meet*, ſaid *Paul* and *Barnabas, that the word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to you.* God had a peculiar favour for that People. But they put it from them, they would have none of the Grace of God offered to them; and therefore, themſelves being Judges, were unworthy of eternal life. *Publicans* followed Jeſus, but *Phariſees* would not, they would not come in: *verily I ſay unto you, that the Publicans and Harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.* It was they that were bidden to the feaſt, but refuſed to come. They were as backward to accept of the Grace of the Goſpel, as *Iſrael* was to go into *Canann*; *He came to his own, and his own received him not. I would have gathered you, and ye would not. Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.* Chriſt wooed them all the time of his Miniſtry; but they rejected his offers of Grace: *All the day long have I ſtretched forth my hands to a diſobedient and gainſaying people.* When the repenting *Publicans* glorified God, and were thankful for *Johns* Miniſtry which pointed them to Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt (*And all the people that heard him, and the Publicans, juſtified God, being baptized with the baptiſm of John*) It is ſaid, *that the Phariſees and Lawyers rejected the counſel of God.* But it was their ruin. Nay Chriſt tells us, they would *neither go themſelves into the kingdom of heaven, nor ſuffer thoſe that were entering, to go in.* And therefore decreed, that whoſoever ſhould confeſs Jeſus to be the Chriſt, ſhould be put out of the Synagogue.

Acts 13. 47.

Matt. 21. 31.

John 1. 11.
Matt. 23. 37.
John 5. 40.
Rom. 10. 21.

Luke 7. 29.

Matt. 23. 13.

Scribes and *Phariſees* will not own ſuch a Chriſt, as *Publicans* and *Sinners* do; nor own ſuch Goſpel Grace, nor go to ſuch a Heaven

The *Jews* would not joyn with the *Gentiles* in receiving the Goſpel.

Goſpel. *Simon* the *Phariſee* marvelled and muttered, that Jeſus would have any thing to do with ſuch a Woman as *Mary Magdalen*: *If this man were a Prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is, that toucheth him; for ſhe is a ſinner.* Luc. 7. 39.

Now the Reaſons why ſuch men refuſe the Grace of the Goſpel, are theſe.

Reaſ. 1. Becauſe they were and are too proud to believe in ſo mean a Saviour as Chriſt ſeemed to be in his firſt appearance to the world. *Is not this the carpenters ſon? And is not this the Carpenter?* They looked for Chriſt, but it was for one with worldly Pomp and Grandure, and ſo Chriſts ſtate of humiliation was a ſtumbling-ſtone to them, wherein was fulfilled that propheſy, *He hath no form nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him: he is deſpiſed and rejected of men.* They would not venture their Salvation upon ſuch a mean Chriſt as he appeared to be. Mar. 6. 3. Matt. 13. 55. Iſa. 53. 2, 3.

2. The Grace of the Goſpel doth not ſuit with the proper genius of ſuch men. Men of parts, and morality, and ſome kind of Religion too, cannot count thoſe things loſs, which the Grace of the Goſpel will have them do. Theſe men perceive that if they receive this Grace, they muſt quite change their opinion of themſelves, and other things; which they cannot hear of. Grace makes men new Creatures; and ſo makes them oppoſite to their former ſelves; as *Paul* was to *Saul*. Such men take their Gifts, and their morality, their will worſhip, to be Grace. And therefore that which will make them to caſt away all theſe in their juſtification before God, they cannot receive and reliſh. 2 Cor. 5 17.

It is not an eaſy thing for ſuch men to think there is nothing of price and value in all they do for obtaining of Eternal Life. Much harder is it to bring them to look upon their own goodneſs, and Righteouſneſs, as hindrances from the Grace of Chriſt and Heaven. But it is ſo; for when *Paul* had grace, he ſaw that his Gifts and Priviledges, and legal Righteouſneſs which he once admired, had been his hinderance from Chriſt and Heaven, and therefore counted *all things loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt.* Matt. 19. Phil. 3. 8.

Becauſe theſe men live civilly, and deal juſtly, they think themſelvs Saints; and now for them to receive the Grace of God

God? this will obſcure all theſe things (as the appearance of the Sun doth the Stars) and make them to undo all they had already done for Heaven; as the *Nazarite* was to loſe the
Numb. 6. 12. days of his ſeparation that were defiled. Such Grace as outs a man of himſelf, of his good Works, as well as his evil; his Righteouſneſs, as as well as his ſins; that makes him caſt away all his former good eſteem of himſelf, and of his eſtate towards God; they are unperſwadable to this; to this, without the ſpeceial transforming influence of the Divine Spirit, they neither can nor will ſtoop.

Application. Firſt, This informs us how hard and rare it is for men that are but externally Righteous and Religious, to be converted and ſaved. They were ſuch men, many of them, that our bleſſed Saviour ſpake ſo ſtrangely of; *Their hearts are waxed groſs, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have cloſed, leſt at any time they ſhould ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and underſtand with their hearts, and ſhould be converted, and I ſhould heal them.* They ſaw Chriſts Miracles, yet they cloſed their Eyes leſt they ſhould ſee; and they heard Chriſts Miniſtry, and yet ſtopt their Ears, leſt they ſhould hear.
Mark 10. 23. As Chriſt ſaid of rich men, how hardly ſhould they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of God? So may it be ſaid, how hard is it for a man that truſteth in his Righteouſneſs, to be Converted and Saved? His Righteouſneſs makes him ſo ſelf-confident, that it keeps him off from the uſe of Chriſt. A prophane perſon is nearer Converſion than a civil or moral man. Not that Prophaneneſs is nearer Grace than Morality; but becauſe a prophane man is ſooner and more eaſily ſelf-condemned than the other. The other hath ſomething of his
Matt. 21. own, which he thinks he may truſt to: The *Publicans* and *Harlots*, ſaith our Saviour to the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, *go into the kingdom of God before you.* *Hypocrites*, of all men, are moſt ſeldom Converted. That Scripture is fulfilled in them, *He feedeth on aſhes*;
Iſa. 44. 20. *a deceived heart hath turned him aſide, that he cannot deliver his ſoul, nor ſay, Is there not a lye in my right hand?*
2 Theſ. 2. 11. God doth in Judgment give him up *to believe a lye.* I ſay not, that it is impoſſible that a ſelf-conceited *Phariſee* ſhould be converted; as Chriſt ſaid, *all things are poſſible with God.* *Paul* was a *Phariſee*, and thought himſelf blameleſs as to the Righteouſneſs of the Law, and yet he was converted. And ſo it appears

appears was *Nicodemus*, who was of the *Phariſees*; he brings a mixture of *myrrh* and *aloes*, about an hundred pound weight, in honour to Chriſt at his Burial: But I ſay, it is a hard and rare thing for a Hypocrite, or one that truſts in his own righteouſneſs, to be converted; he ſwells too much in his own conceit, to *enter in at the ſtrait gate*. God is put to it in dealing with ſuch men; O *Ephraim*, what ſhall I do unto thee? O *Judah*, what ſhall I do unto thee? John 3. 1. Luke 13. 24. Hoſ. 6. 4.

Secondly, This ſhews us the reaſon, why our bleſſed Saviour was more tart and ſevere in his language and dealing with the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, than with *Publicans* and *Sinners*; as with that praying *Publican*, that ſmote on his breaſt, and with that weeping ſinner, *Luke* 7. He dealt gently with theſe, as with *bruiſed reeds, & a ſmoaking flax*. But when he came to ſpeak to *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, he calls them hypocrites almoſt at every word, and begins almoſt every ſentence with wo, *Wo unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites*. What was the reaſon of this? But becauſe they were ſuch ſelf-confidents, that they ſlighted him, and his righteouſneſs, and his offers of Grace and Mercy, which other poor ſouls prized, and valued, and ſought after: they thruſt Chriſt out of his Office, and denied his Authority. Luke 18. 13. Matth. 23.

Thirdly, This informs us, That men that have only a form of Godlineſs, and a name to live, as moſt of the Church of *Sardis* had; they are men of the greateſt perverſeneſs; men of crooked ſpirits, like knotty wood, that cannot be wrought on to bring it into the building; *They are a perverſe and crooked generation*. This was ſpoken of *Iſrael*. The perverſeſt ſpirits againſt the Grace of the Goſpel may be in the Church: The Apoſtle *Peter* called the *Jews, a froward generation*. And theſe perverſe ſpirits may be known by theſe two things. 1. They wave the Scripture for their rule, and are ſtiff for the traditions of men; ſo were the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, a ſtrict ſect, as *Paul calls them*. 2. They pervert the meaning of Scripture, and make it ſpeak for their own luſts; as *Philip* of *Macedon* did the Heathen Oracles, which were ſaid to ſay, what *Philip* would have them. Jeſus took notice of this in his Sermon on the Mount, wherein he oppoſeth not his anſwers againſt *Moſes*, but againſt the corrupt gloſſes of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. From this kind of men, you may ſee Rev. 3. 1. Deut. 32. 5. Acts 2. 40. Matt. 5. 21.

your ſelves different by your high eſteem of the Grace of the Goſpel, by your experience of the power of it in your hearts, and the influence it hath on your lives and converſations.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Sheweth Gods gracious Condeſcention towards the greateſt ſinners. From the latter part of the 28th Verſe.

Therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

WE have done with the Action between the Elder Son, and one of his Fathers Servants; he next continues it with his Father; and his Father begins, *Therefore came his father out, and entreated him.* Oh the condeſcention of God to froward, perverſe men. *If he humbles himſelf in beholding things that are in heaven and in earth*, Pſal. 113. 6. How then doth he humble himſelf, when he entreats ſinners! Now the Doctrine from theſe Words is this,

Doct. That God doth entreat ſtubborn, perverſe, and proud ſinners, to come in and accept of the Grace and Mercy of the Goſpel, *As tho God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſts ſtead, be ye reconciled unto God.* See how this bleſſed meſſage went
2 Cor. 5. 20. a begging amongſt ſinners. Gods language when he made the world, was, *Let there be light.* And when he gave the Law, it was Commanding. But in the Goſpel he is pleaſed to entreat. And God doth this,

1. Becauſe he is God, and not man. *I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim*; froward and wilful *Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.* It is a mighty encouragement that poor ſinners have,
Hoſ. 11. 9. that they have to do with God, who hath power to pardon what
Exod. 33. 19. ſinners he will *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy,*
Numb 14. 17. *and be gracious to whom he will be gracious.* It is Gods power that he can pardon great ſins; and it is his power that he can ſtoop ſo to ſinners. No man, no creature could do this, hath ſo much

much power, and could have ſo much patience and condeſcention *Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneſt iniquities?* God ſhews his Godhead as much in his gracious tranſactions with ſinners, as in any thing: A mother can entreat a froward and peeviſh child, but what man entreats an enemy to accept of his forgiveneſs? Or what Prince ever entreats a traytor, or a ſtubborn rebel to accept of a pardon? No, this is not the *manner of man*, as *David* ſaid, he muſt be God that can do this. God may ſay to every ſinner, I am God and not man, and therefore I entreat you to be reconciled to me, and to accept my grace and favour. Micah 7. 18. 2 Sam. 7. 19.

Reaſ. 2. Jeſus Chriſt hath purchaſed this of his Father, That ſinners may be thus graciouſly dealt with. *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf:* Entreating ſinners to be reconciled. The Juſtice of God would not let him be ſo forbearing, patient, and pitiful to ſinners, and ſo importunate with them to be ſaved: All this is in Chriſts Ranſom and Purchaſe for ſinners. Why doth not God deal thus with the Angels that ſinned, but becauſe Chriſt purchaſed nothing for them? And as Chriſt hath purchaſed this Grace of his Father; ſo he prays his Father alſo; for when God ſaw reaſon ſufficient to caſt off the *Jews* before he did it, Chriſt interpoſed, and importun'd him to forbear them a while longer, *Lord, let it alone this year alſo.* 2 Cor. 5. 19. Luk. 13. 8.

Reaſ. 3. God ſtoops thus to ſinful man, that he may know the deſperate wickedneſs that is in his heart.

That a ſinner ſhould not only ſtand it out againſt Gods commands and threatnings, but alſo againſt his entreatings and beſeechings; this ſhews how deſperately wicked the nature of man is.

Reaſon 4. God doth thus, that he may leave ſinners without excuſe. In the great and terrible day of the Lord, he will ſay to every condemned ſinner, *Thou art inexcuſable, O man.* For did not I lay my commands on thee to repent! *But now God commands all men every where to repent.* And did not I lay my commands upon thee, to believe in my Son? *This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe in the name of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt.* And did I not expoſtulate and reaſon the caſe with thee, why thou wouldſt not return to me, and be ſaved? *Why will ye dye, O houſe of Iſrael?* But more than this, did I Rom. 2. Acts 17. 30. 1 Joh. 3. 23. Eze. 33. 11.

not entreat thee with the words of my own mouth, as *Job* said to his Servants, did I not entreat thee in the bowels of mercy, to be reconciled to me, to quit thine enmity against me and my Holiness, and to accept of pardon offered thee a hundred, a thousand times? Such a sinner must needs be speechless as that man was, *Matth.* 22. 12. Sinners will then be αὐτοκατάκριτοι self-condemned: They shall not then reply upon God, that at God, as now they do; but all the condemned world will be found guilty before him.

Tit. 3. 11.
Rom. 9. 20.
Rom. 3. 19.

Application. 1. Let this put us upon admiration, that God, the great and holy God, should thus stoop to perverse and proud sinners: If *Solomon* wondred at Gods promise to his people to be present in the Temple, *But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth?* How much more may we say, But will God in very deed humble and abase himself so far, as to intreat sinners to accept of mercy? That God should say to a stubborn sinner, as *Paul* to *Philemon*, *Tho I might enjoin thee, yet I rather beseech thee.* The Apostle *John* saith, *There appeared a great wonder in heaven.* Truly this is a great wonder that appears in Heaven to the holy Angels, That God should intreat and beseech sinners to be reconciled to him. Good will towards men was a thing that Angels did wonder at: Much more may they and we admire it, when it is manifested by so gracious an Embassy, that sinners are entreated to accept it. This is one of those Gospel mysteries, which the Angels desire to look into, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. Therefore, as *Mary* kept and pondered the sayings of the Angel in her heart, *Luke* 2. So let us keep and ponder this saying of Jesus Christ in ours, *Therefore came his father out and entreated him.* For we are apt to see as little wonder in Gods free grace, as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did in Christs greatest miracles.

2 Chron. 6. 18.
Phil. 8 9.
Rev. 12. 1.

Secondly. Let this Doctrine exhort us to mind Gods entreaties, as often as we consider his commands. Think with thy self, that as God commands thee, so he entreats thee too, not to indulge thy passion, pride, covetousness, discontent, distrust. That God entreats thee to mind Heaven more than earth; to look to thy heart in prayer, to take heed how thou hearest; to do, as well as hear. We have need of all this, and God sees we have need of all to work upon us, and all works but upon few.

Quest.

Quæst. But why doth God suffer men to refuse his calls, and his offers of Grace and Salvation?

Anſ. To ſuch a queſtion as this, *Auguſtine* anſwered, *Doctiorem quærat, qui hanc Queſtionem ei explicet.* Let him look one, that can ſatisfie his Curioſity, for I neither can nor will do it. Oh remember, when ſuch queſtions as theſe are put into your thoughts, how many *Bethſhemites* were deſtroyed for peeping into the Ark. If God will leave a negative voice in the power of men as to their Converſion, as it ſeems he doth, as Jeſus ſaid to *Peter*, *What is that to thee?* You may as well ask God, why he fixed not mans will, and all the will of Angels to their firſt eſtate? But this is replying againſt God, or diſputing with him, which the Apoſtle blames, as a proud and inſolent part in any man. Be ſatisfied with what is revealed. It is the Devils trick, to put you upon queries, and perplexing reaſonings, to hinder you in your duty. What ſaith the Scripture? *Let God be true, and every man a liar.* *Are not my ways equal, and your ways unequal, ſaith the Lord?*

1 Sam. 6. 19. Acts 7. 51. Rom. 9 20. Rom 3. 4. Ez. 18. 25.

To diſtruſt the Wiſdom and Equity of God, tends much to Atheiſm. Therefore do not pore over-boldly into theſe ſecrets; but humbly adore them. When *Paul* had diſcourſed the caſe of Godscasting off the *Jews*, and taking in the *Gentiles*, he concludes thus: *O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledg of God.* And know this of a truth, that Gods Power takes not away all Agency from man in his Converſion. It is the Eye that ſees, tho the Sun gives the light. Man muſt *work out his ſalvation*, tho it be *God that giveth both to will and to do. Obedience*, ſaith God by the Prophet, *is better than ſacrifice.* So obedience to the Will of God, is better than inquiring into the Reaſon of it. Do your duty, and that is your beſt way to be ſatisfied. *If any man do his will*, ſaith Chriſt, *he ſhall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.* *Hagar* and her Son were turned out of the houſe; but theſe men, who undertake to diſpute with God, turn out themſelves.

Rom. 11. 33. Phil. 2. 12, 13. John 7. 17.

So much for the 28. Verſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Wherein is ſhewed, That meer Moraliſts and Carnal Profeſſors, are very confident of their good eſtate towards God. Together with thoſe ſolid grounds upon which men may ſafely judg hereof. From the firſt part of the 29. Verſe.

And he anſwering, ſaid to his Father, Lo, theſe many years do I ſerve thee, neither tranſgreſſed I at any time thy commandment.

HEre we have part of the Elder Sons anſwer to his Father. And it is full ſtufft with arrogancy and ſelf-conceit.

Now we are to remember, that the Father here perſonates God, and the Elder Son the *Jews*, eſpecially the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. And theſe repreſent that ſort of men, who are ſelf-confidents, and ſelf-juſticiaries; that think themſelves righteous, and to *need no repentance*; the whole *that need not the phyſician*; that find fault with Gods Goſpel-Diſpenſations, and *deſpiſe others*, that indeed are better than themſelves. In a word, *very hypocrites, having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power*; reſembling Saints without, but full of uncleanneſs within. So that the Doctrine we may hence learn, is this,

Luc. 18.
Luc. 15 7.
Matth 9. 12.
Matth. 20. 11.
Luc. 18. 9.
Matth. 23.
2 Tim. 3. 6.
Matth. 23 27.

Doct. That men who are but externally righteous and religious; are very confident of their goodneſs, and good eſtate towards God. There are many clear inſtances in the caſe, beſides this, before us. As thoſe profeſſors of Chriſt, who preached and wrought Miracles in his Name, of whom Chriſt himſelf ſpake, Matt. 7. 22. *Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophecied in thy name, and in thy name caſt out devils, and done many mighty works?*

They

They ſpeak like men confident of themſelves and of Heaven. So were the five fooliſh Virgins, becauſe of their trimmed Lamps, their fair profeſſion of Religion; they were confident their ſtate was good: *Lord, Lord, open to us.* So that young man was confident he had kept all the commands of God that Chriſt named, from his youth: *All theſe have I kept from my youth up.* And thoſe *Jews*, in *John* 8. after all Chriſts reaſoning with them, yet would hold their confidence that *Abraham* was their Father, and that they were the Children of God. The wiſe man ſaith, *There is a generation pure in their own eyes, that are not waſhed from their filthineſs.* So we find *Ephraim* holding forth his confidence of his good eſtate. *In all my labour, they ſhall find none iniquity in me: Ephraim* challenged even the Prophet to ſay, black is his eye: No, ſaith he, I have a better Conſcience than ſo; when, alas, poor *Ephraim* was *a cake not turned; neither hot nor cold; halting betwixt two*; a very mongrel. He had *gray hairs, and knew it not.*

Matth. 25. Verſe 11. Matth. 19. 20. Verſe 34, 44. Prov. 30. 12. Hoſ. 12. 8. Hoſ 7. 8. Rev. 3. 1 Kings 18. Hoſ. 7. 9.

This man in the text ſaith more of himſelf, than ever any man could ſay, but Jeſus Chriſt: *Neither tranſgreſſed I at any time thy commandment:* Jeſus indeed could ſay ſo, *I do always the things that pleaſe my father.* But who elſe could ever ſay ſo? yet this man dares do it; ſo confident was he of his own goodneſs, and of his good eſtate towards God. And this ſelf-confidence is common with ſuch men, in every Generation. Such men now have as good a conceit of themſelves, as they had then. It is an experienced thing, Self-confidence and ſelf flattery, follows the nature of man: *Thou art confident that thou thy ſelf art a guide of the blind.* The *Jew* looked upon the *Gentile*, as a poor blind Creature, and on himſelf as the Light of the World; as Chriſt called his Apoſtles. Yea, tho ſuch men are as full of ſores within, as *Job* or *Lazarus* was without, yet they think themſelves as fair as *Abſolom, without blemiſh from head to foot.*

John 8. 29. Rom. 2. 19. Matth. 5. 14.

And what is the reaſon of this?

Reaſ. 1. Firſt, their Ignorance of the ſpiritualneſs of the Law of God. It was the opinion of the *Jews* that ſought righteouſneſs by the Law, eſpecially the *Phariſees*, That the Law commanded and forbad only external acts; as that nothing but killing

killing was murder. Whereas our Saviour ſaith, that unadviſed anger, is an approach to Murder, and that hatred is murder: *Whoſoever hateth his brother, is a murderer.* But the *Jews* looked only at the *Letter*, and knew nothing of the *ſpiritual* part of the command. Nor do natural men now; and this was, and is the reaſon of their ſelf-confidence. It was ſo with *Paul*, whilſt a *Phariſee*: *Concerning the righteouſneſs of the law, I was blameleſs*: He compared himſelf only with the outſide of the Law; his own outſide, and the outſide of the Law together; he neither looked within the Law, nor within himſelf. Therefore ſaith he, *I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, ſin revived, and I died:* Without the ſpiritual part of the Law, I had no ſenſe of Sin, nor trouble of Conſcience; but when I came to feel the Law within, judging and condemning, not only evil Acts, but evil Concupiſcence; then I ſaw I was a ſinful wretch, and dead in Law. So that mens ignorance of the ſpiritualneſs of the Law, is a great reaſon of their good thoughts of themſelves, and that that keeps them from the ſenſe of ſin, and trouble of Conſcience, and ſo all is well with them: *I am rich, and increaſed in goods, and have need of nothing.*

Matt. 5. 21, 22.

1 John 3. 15.

Rom. 7. 9.

Rev. 3. 17.

Secondly, Theſe men infer their good eſtate from their morality, and fair carriage in the World, and negative goodneſs; they are *not as other men*, Adulterers, Drunkards, Unjuſt, and the like; and they have a cask of Religion, a form of Godlineſs. But as for their morality, ſelf-intereſt alone, without any regard to God, will teach this to every man. And as for a form of godlineſs, there may be this, where there is not the Power. A man may Preach and Pray, and be ſeemingly Godly, and yet have no ſaving Grace; It was ſo with *Judas*; there was ſo little appearing difference betwixt him and the other Diſciples, that they were more jealous of themſelves, than of him; therefore they ſay, *Maſter is it I.*

Matth. 26. 22.

Thirdly, Another great reaſon of ſuch mens good thoughts of themſelves and their condition, is a Spirit of deluſion that poſſeſſeth them: *They have a lye in their right hand*, a very phancie or figment, and know it not: As the Prophet ſpeaketh of Idolaters.

Iſa. 44. 20.

For

For 1. Satan blinds their minds; he makes them to think they are in *Dothan*, when they are in *Samaria*. Satan deceives them, as he did *Eve*. He can transform himself into an Angel of Light. As there is *Deceptio visus*, as when the Magicians seemed to turn their Rods into Serpents, which were but meer phantasms; a craft taught them by the Devil; so there is *Deceptio mentis*, a cheating of the mind and conscience in spiritual things, and in a mans spiritual condition. How confident did the lying spirit make *Zedekiah*, that the counsel he gave *Ahab*, was from the Lord? 2 Cor. 4. 4. 2 Kings 6. 2 Cor. 11. 3. 1 Kings 22.

2. As they are deceived by Satan, so they deceive themselves; they play the sophisters with themselves, they have false discourse with their own consciences. Such had *Saul* when he gloried to *Samuel* of his obedience: *Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.* And when *Samuel* gave a check to his confidence, he reasserts it; *yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord.* 1 Sam. 15. v. 20. Gen. 3.

At first Satan used the Serpent to deceive man; and now he useth the hearts of men to deceive themselves. And therefore the Scripture saith, *the heart is deceitful above all things.* Hence it is, that *every way of a man is right in his own eyes*, and *that all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes.* Rotten wood will shine in the dark: and all natural men are in the dark as to spiritual things: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* So deceitful is the heart, that it deceives them as to God, and what he is, as well as what themselves are: *thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thy self.* They transform God into an Idol, after their own phancy. Jer. 17. 9. Pro. 21. 2. Pro. 16. 2. 1 Cor. 2. 14. Psal. 50. 21.

3. As Satan beguiles them, and their own hearts deceive them: so God in his Righteous Judgment, *sends them strong delusions, that they should believe a lye*; as he sent forth a lying spirit into the mouth of all *Ahabs* Prophets. 2 Thes. 2. 11. 1 Kings 22.

And there are many sins, that provoke God to do this; as contempt of the Gospel: *Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lye.* And so pride and self-conceit: for as God *guideth the humble and the meek in judgment, and teacheth such in his way*; *so he beholds the proud and self-conceited afar off*: As the *Jews* did a *Leper*. 2 Thes. 2. 10 11. Psal. 25. 9. Numb. 12.

And when God puts a man out of his presence, then he wanders as *Cain* did; and the Devil meets with him, and is a lying spirit in his heart, as he was in *Zedekiahs* mouth, and as he was to *Eve*.

Application. This informs us of many things.

1. Here we see the different spirit of men that are sincerely godly, and those that are but seemingly so: The holiest men are yet apt to be jealous and fearful of themselves; they are full of sincerity, and yet not always without doubts; and therefore commune much with their own hearts; whereas men that have some seeming holiness without, but not true holiness within, are full of confidence and self-conceit, and take all their hearts say of them upon trust; have little
Psal 73 4 trouble of conscience all their life, nor any bands in their death.

2. This shews us under what great deceit this kind of men
Jer. 9.6. continually live, *They hold fast deceit*, as the Prophet speaks. They have a deceiver and supplanter within themselves, their own deceived and deceiving hearts. Their heart is like a flattering glass, makes them look fair, and in
Eph. 1.27. their own eyes already, what Christ will make his own people, when he shall present them to his Father, *without spot or wrinkle*. The meer moral man looks upon himself to have more Grace, than he doth that hath grace indeed; he sees no cause to complain, *Mine iniquities are a burden too heavy for me*, as *David* did. Nor to cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* as *Paul* did. So that
Ez. 28. 3. the Lord may say to such a man as he did ironically to the Prince of *Tyrus*, *Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel.* So, behold thou art holier than *David*, and holier than *Paul*; thou thinkst thy self so. Oh what a grand cheat is such a man to himself, *He is whole, and needs not the Physician*: As Christ
Matth. 9. said of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. He feels not the need of
Rev. 3. Christ, as a gracious soul doth; *I am rich, and have need of nothing.*

3. This may inform us of the very sad estate of these men, who are so highly conceited of the goodness of it. For, 1. They are much, if not altogether hindred from that sense of sin and guilt, and the corruption of human nature, which is necessary to conversion, and useful afterwards; and this is a very dangerous condition. 2. It hinders their desires of Grace, and so

is

is a double bar of their Converſion; it is hard to bring good natures to think there is any other grace. This is the plague of many mens hearts; when they have a comparative righteouſneſs to brag of, as that *Phariſee*, Luke 18. *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are*: There are thouſands worſe than I: I am no Drunkard, Adulterer, nor Extortioner; Oh, this ſwells them up; when they can ſay, we do this and that; as that *Phariſee*, *I faſt twice a week, and pay tithes of all that I poſſeſs.* Now they bleſs themſelves as *Saul* did, *I have done the commandment of the Lord*; when he had left the greateſt part undone. Thoſe Diſeaſes are moſt dangerous that men are moſt inſenſible of; ſo ſelf-Righteouſneſs is as dangerous a diſeaſe as prophaneſs; yea, more dangerous, becauſe it is not felt as a diſeaſe: If comparative righteouſneſs would ſave a man, there would ſcarce any man be damned; for where almoſt can you find the man, but can ſay, I thank God I am not as ſome other men are?

Secondly, This Doctrine is of uſe to Exhortation. O take heed of ungrounded confidence of your good eſtate: For a man to deceive himſelf, is the greateſt folly: As no man can be flattered by another, till he firſt flatter himſelf; ſo no man can be deceived by another, till he be willing to deceive himſelf: and this ſelf-deceit ſprings from inordinate ſelf-love, a great ſin of the laſt days. *Know this, that in the laſt days men ſhall be lovers of themſelves*, and *boaſters*, and *proud* fellows: Men that are unduly in love with themſelves, ſoon grow proud and ſelf-conceited of themſelves and their condition: Self-love breeds ſelf-flattery, and theſe are glaſſes that make a man ſeem double to himſelf, to what he really is: Againſt this dangerous diſeaſe the Apoſtle cautions us, *Let no man think of himſelf more highly than he ought*; but humbly and with abaſing thoughts, as *Paul* did when he thought himſelf *leſs than the leaſt of all Saints.* When a man thinks himſelf to be ſomething, he is nothing, as it was with the Angel of the Church of *Laodicea*, *Thou ſayeſt I am rich, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art poor, and miſerable, and wretched, and blind, and naked.*

2 Tim. 3.

Rom. 12. 3.

Eph. 3. 8.

Rev. 3. 17.

Queſt. But will you make nothing of good natute? Nothing of parts and accompliſhments? Nothing of moral righteouſneſs? nothing of a Profeſſion of Religion?

Anſ. I anſwer, they are all nothing, as to the evidencing of a ſaving ſtate, which muſt be ſomething of a higher nature than all this; in their kind and compaſs they are lovely things,
Mar. 10 21. even in Chriſts eyes; but yet there is one thing lacking to make a ſaving ſtate. If you ſay colours are worth nothing without light, you do not diſparage them in their own kind; and ſo if I ſay all theſe are not ſufficient without Grace to a mans ſalvation; I do not undervalue them, and ſay they are nothing at all. Braſs is good and uſeful, but it is not currant coin; ſo good nature and morality, and a profeſſion of Religion, are good, and lovely, and neceſſary, but they are not ſufficient to ſtate a man, a godly man; Godlineſs is ſomething above all theſe.

Therefore reſt not on theſe things alone, take heed of ſelf-confidence: Tho you are quiet at preſent, yet whenever conſcience comes to be awakened whilſt you live, or when you come to die, or to judgment, you will find your ſilver is but droſs; and that *to be all loſs, which you counted gain*; as *Paul* ſaid upon his converſion. It is ſaid of Witches, that the Devil makes them believe he gives them Silver and Gold; but when they come to uſe it, it is but ſticks and ſtraws: So all your confidence in your own goodneſs and righteouſneſs, when it comes to the trying point, to trouble of conſcience, to death, or to Judgment, you will find all to be but *wood, hay,*
2 Cor. 3. 12. *and ſtubble.* Oh then, take care you cheriſh no other confidence, but what will abide the day of the Lord, wherewith
1 John 4. 17. *you may have boldneſs in the day of judgment.*

I intend not the diſturbance of any mans well-grounded hopes and confidence, for ſuch there is, a confidence that comes in by Chriſt; it is obtained by his merit, and is wrought by
Eph. 3. 12. his ſpirit. I would make void all ſelf-deceit, and ſelf-deluſions, and the cheats of *Satan*, who as he transforms himſelf into an Angel of light, ſo helps many men to transform themſelves into Saints, who are nothing leſs. I would neither leave you at uncertainties, nor would I puzle you with things unneceſſary;
Act. 15 28. *I would not lay any greater burden upon you, than the Holy Ghoſt doth*; As the Apoſtles ſaid. If I ſhould preſs ſuch things upon you, as ſome did upon the Brethren, who told them, *That unleſs they were circumciſed after the manner of Moſes, they could not be ſaved*: So if I ſhould tell you, That except you

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be of such or such a perswasion, or have such and such Degrees of Grace, ye cannot be saved; I should then bind heavy burdens on you, and grievous to be born, as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did on their hearers. I shall therefore only tell you, what is necessary to enable you safely to conclude, you are in a saving state. Which you may do by these following particulars. Matth. 23. 4.

First, By a Spirit of godly fear and jealousie over your selves, of which the Apostle speaks, *Behold this same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort; what fear it wrought in you,* or jealousie of your selves. 2 Cor. 7. 11.

Now this Gospel-jealousie over a mans self, brings him to much self-searching; a work that all natural men are unaccustomed to. There is a backwardness in men by nature to come to a tryal; as a crasie body will not endure the tryal of the Weather, nor a sore Eye the tryal of the light. Men whose state is evil, *love darkness rather than light*. When the heart is unsound, it is tedious and grievous to be searched; but where there is true Grace, it puts men upon it. *I have examined my ways*, saith *David*. He did by himself, as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did by *Canaan*; they searched the Land, and gave a true report of it. So will every good man do: *Let us search and try our ways.* John 3. 19. Psal. 119. 59. Numb 14. Lam. 3. 40.

And he will desire to be searched and discovered by a better Eye than his own: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me*; he saith not, see if there be any sin, for no man is free from that. Saint *Paul* speaks of *sin that dwelt in him*. But any indulgence or allowance of sin, any sin that is incompatible to a Saint, any way that differs from *the way everlasting, the good old way, the way that is called holy*. A gracious heart is still casting out its scum. Psal 139. 24. Rom. 7. 17. Jer. 6. 16. Isa. 35. 8.

It is true, a carnal man, a bold hypocrite may say, See me, as *Jehu* did to *Jehonadab*, but not *search* me. Come, *see my zeal for the Lord of hosts*. But tho he would be seen without, yet not within. This was the Spirit of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, they would have their outsides seen, they did the good they did *to be seen*: But they durst not have their inside seen, where was *nothing but rottenness and corruption*, as Jesus said, who knew them within. 2 Kings 10. 16. Matth. 6. Matth. 23. 27. John 2. 25.

But

But now, when a man keeps a godly jealousie over his heart at all times, and is frequently making his request to God, Job 34. 32. *Lord search me, and what I see not, teach thou me*; and is inquisitive to find out the *Achan*, the Sin that troubles God, and troubles his own peace, whether it be a sin of profit or pleasure, constitution or calling, that it may be judged and cut off; this is a sign of sincerity, which is the great vain of saving Grace, and that which commends a man to Rom. 2. 28, 29. God.

2 Cor. 1. 12. Where therefore, there is this godly sincerity, it runs it self into these four heads, as the River of *Eden* did.

2 Cor. 7. 11. 1. A godly jealousie over a mans self, as hath been shewed.

Lam. 3. 40. 2. Diligence in self-searching, and desire to be helped here-

Psal. 139. 24. in: *Let us search and try our ways. And search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts.*

3. Gladness to have unknown failings discovered, tho by

Psal. 141. 5. others: *Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness.*

4. A desire to grow more and more sincere, for this Grace is but in part, as well as others, and hath opposition from the reliques of the natural deceitfulness of heart. So that nothing is more prayed for by a sincere Soul, than still more sincerity:

Psal. 119 80. *Lord, let my heart be sound in thy statutes.* There is a desire after that ἀπολογίαν, that self clearing, or willingness to approve our selves to God, spoken of by the Holy Ghost, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. Saith *Peter*, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I*

John 21. 17. *love thee.* *As of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God,*

2 Cor. 2. 17. *speak we in Christ.* Not as many, *which corrupt the word of God*, play the Hucksters with it, make our own advantage of it, Sophisticate it; as Wine with Water or other Liquors; so they with their own notions and phancies. *But as of sincerity*, we preach that which is the pure Word of God; and *in the sight of God*, we preach it as if God were present.

Secondly, Where saving Grace is, there is poverty of Spirit. Poverty of Spirit accompanies every Grace, and discovers other Graces. Repentance and godly Sorrow for sin, are ever acted with a desire of more, and so is Faith; *Lord, I*

Mark 9. 24. *believe, help thou my unbelief*, and so is every Grace. Proud men may have gifts; so had false Apostles, and false Brethren in the Apostles days. But none except humble men have Grace:

James 4. *He giveth grace to the humble.* Where Grace is, it much abaseth

baſeth a man in his own eyes. How low was holy *Paul* in his own eyes, who reputed himſelf to have been *the chief of ſinners*? and when he was in a ſtate of Grace, *Leſs than the leaſt of all Saints.*

It was Pride, that ſhewed there was no grace, in that *Phariſees* confeſſion: *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, nor as this Publican.* Indeed, when a man can fill ſuch a confeſſion with humility, and a ſenſe of his own remaining unworthineſs, and aſcribe what he is, to the grace of God in Chriſt, as the Apoſtle did; *by the grace of God, I am what I am*: Here Poverty of ſpirit is evidently ſeen. 1 Cor. 15. 9. And poverty of ſpirit doth not only evidence the being of Grace, but alſo helps to increaſe it. High hills have moſt air, and the moſt pleaſant proſpects; but low valleys are more fruitful; ſo men of fair parts, and profeſſion, may make a great ſhow in the Church, and pleaſe themſelves and their own humours; but they are the poor in ſpirit that grow in Grace, and bring forth fruit to God; the other, to themſelves, as Hoſ. 10. 1. *Iſrael* did; but theſe to God; their fruit returns to him from whom it comes.

God is taken with a man that is poor in ſpirit, as well as with Saints and Angels in Heaven: *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble*; to give life to his graces, and to his comforts. Great is that Promiſe made to this grace by Jeſus Chriſt his own mouth; *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And by the Lord, who hath Heaven for his Throne, and Earth for his Foot-ſtool: *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite ſpirit.* So that ſincerity and poverty of ſpirit, are two infallible touch-ſtones of ſaving Grace. Iſa. 57. 15. Matt. 5. 3. Iſa. 66. 2.

Thirdly, ſaving Grace is a deep inward work: ſo is not the moſt ſpecious profeſſion of Religion, or common Grace. Take the beſt of another man, and it is of another nature. All that the Apoſtle accumulates and may be ſpoken of a natural man, being inlightened in the myſteries of the Goſpel, having a *taſte of the heavenly gift*, of the goodneſs of Chriſt, the gift of God, and being a partaker of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; and having a taſte of the goodneſs of the word of God, as *Herod heard John many things gladly*, Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6. John 4. 10. Mark 6. 20.

and

Matt 13. 20. and the ſtony ground *received the word, on a ſudden, with joy,* and a taſte *of the powers of the world to come,* as *Balaam had,* Numb. 23.10. *Let me die the death of the Righteous, and let my laſt end be like his:* All this may not amount to a deep inward work; and therefore all may be loſt; they may be but flaſhes that come and go like lightning: they have not rooting deep enough, they will endure but a while; as our Saviour ſaith, *Matt* 13.20.

A Hypocrite may have as ſpecious actions as a man that hath true Grace. With what zeal, and how like a godly 2 Kings 10 Prince did *Jehu* deſtroy *Baal* and his Worſhippers? but a gracious heart was in none of all that: the great difference betwixt a *Hypocrite* and a real Saint, lyes in the bottom of the heart: *Amaziah did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.* 2 Chron. 25. 1.

Real Saints, and others that have but common grace, may be outwardly like one another; but there is a vaſt difference within. *The kings daughter is all glorious within:* But a *Hypocrite's* inſide is full of all uncleanneſs. It is true, where there Pſal. 45. 13. Matt 23. 25. is ſaving Grace, there is precious outwork too. As the Temple was of ſtately Building without; which made the Diſciples to admire it: but the Holy Place, the Holy of Holies Matt. 24. within the Temple, had the greateſt Glory. Thus where there is ſaving grace; men are *Holineſs to the Lord* without, this is written upon all their ways and works, even their common works; *Their converſation is in heaven; they are alive unto* Zec. 14. 20. *God through Jeſus Chriſt.* As a candle in a lanthorn gives Phil. 3 20. light without the Lanthorn as well as within: ſo Grace appears Rom 6. 11. without, as well as within.

But the choiceſt work of grace is within; it is there that Gal. 2. 20. Eph. 3. 17. Chriſt *liveth* and *dwelleth.* It is there that God *writes his law,* Jer. 31. 33. It is there that he *ſheds abroad his love*; There are the great Rom. 5. 5. conflicts betwixt grace and ſin; and there are the *pantings* Rom. 7. *after God.* That of a godly man, which is of great price in 1 Pet. 3 4. the ſight of God, is the *hidden man of the heart. So then with my mind I ſerve the law of God* ſaith, the Apoſtle *Paul.* Grace is Rom. 7. 25. a deep inward work. So that the leaves of it may be pulled 1 John 3. 9. off, but the root cannot be pulled up: *his ſeed remaineth in* Matt 7. *him.* Saving grace, *is like a houſe builded on a rock,* that will en- 24, 25. dure wind and weather. Gifts, and common Grace, and the Matth 13. 21. Profeſſion of Religion, are but temporary things; hard times will

will wither them. But there is an eternity in saving grace; it is here begun, and in Heaven perfected into glory. As Gold, by fire; so Grace by temptations is not destroyed, but refined. *Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.* Rom. 5. 3, 4, 5.

Observe your selves therefore, whether the Kingdom of God be within you? whether he exerciseth his Government over your Hearts, your wills and affections, and all your faculties. Observe, whether God be *in you of a truth*; *know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* whether ye are diligent to make the inside clean, besides what you do outwardly. What disowning and hating of sin there is within. Observe what converse you have with God, such as *David* had when he said, *my meditation of him shall be sweet.* Rom. 7. 15. Psal. 14 34. Gal. 4. 6. Whether the Spirit of Christ is, and works in you, as a *spirit of grace and supplication*, as a Spirit of Holiness, a Spirit of Truth, a teaching, leading, witnessing, sealing, assisting, quickening, establishing spirit? Grace is a deep inward work. Angels converse together mentally; and so do God and Saints, and Christ and gracious Souls. As the Babe in the womb of *Elizabeth* sprang for joy at the Salutation of *Mary*; so God often speaks to a believer with that soft and secret voice, as makes his heart to do the like. Luke 1. 44.

Fourthly, Saving grace is discovered by the strong tendency of the heart to God; to walk with him as *Enoch* did; to do his will, as *David* did; to enjoy him, as *Asaph*; *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee. And it is good for me to draw near to God. With my soul have I desired thee in the night*, saith the Prophet *Isaiah*; *yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.* Grace must needs carry the Soul to its Original and Spring, which is God; But is the whole tendency and inclination of the Soul to God, where there is Grace? No, not actually, tho propositively it be. For first, the Heart may be bent upon other things when it is bent upon God; upon other things subordinately, but ultimately upon God himself. So there may be a regulated self-love; love to relations, and to many other persons and things. I say, when the heart moves to these regularly, the motion at length reacheth to God himself, because it reacheth to the will of God, and the glory of God. As a ship that sails with a side-wind, in time comes to the landing-place. Gen. 5. 24. Acts 18. 22. Psal. 73 Isa. 26. 9.

Queſt. But may there not be a tendency in a gracious Soul to things contrary to God?

Anſ. Yes there may be, and often is; becauſe there is a contrary principle, even where grace is; *viz.* The corruption
Gen. 25. 23. of nature: as there were two contrary Nations in *Rebeccahs* womb together.

The corruption of nature always carries the heart from God, as *Abſolom* did the hearts of the people from *David.* Yet
Deut 22. 25. either it is by force, as the raviſhing of a Damſel in the Law,
26. and then the Soul cries out as the Damſel did; as *Paul,*
Rom. 7. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of death?* Or elſe by deceit, and that will ſoon be diſcovered;
Gen. 29. 25. And when it is, it is bewailed.

The Mariners Needle often waves from the North point, but by inſtinct ſtill returns to it again. So a gracious Soul may be diverted from God, as *Solomon* was by his ſtrange wives; yet is it ſtill reſtleſs till it returns to God again; as the *Jews* ſaid, *I will*
Hoſ. 2. 7. *return unto my firſt husband; for then was it better with me than now.* The bowl muſt not be valued by its rubs, but by its byas. Where there is Grace, the heart in all its diverſions from God to the Creature, ſtill deſires after God; as *Phaltiel* hankerd after his wife, when taken from him; and as *Jonah*
2 Sam. 3. 16. longed after the Temple, when in the belly of Hell: *Yet will*
John 2. 4. *I look towards thy holy temple.* Grace being of the Divine Nature, it doth as naturally move the Soul towards God, as the ſparks fly upward.

Fifthly, Where there is Grace, a man buſieth himſelf much
Cant. 5. about Jeſus Chriſt. The Spouſe was not well without him.
Phil. 3. 10. *Paul* deſired and ſought nothing more, than the knowledg of Jeſus Chriſt, and conformity to him: Chriſt is a holy mans great Imployment.

1. Becauſe all ſaving grace comes from Chriſt, and therefore
John 1. 16. thither it returns again, as the waters into the Sea.

2. Grace ſhews us our need of Chriſt, how that without
John 15. 5. him *we can do nothing: not I, but Chriſt liveth in me.* Therefore
Gal. 2. 20. Chriſt muſt needs be our great buſineſs.

3. Grace diſcovers the excellencies of Jeſus Chriſt. A man never ſees the beauty and loveline ſs of Chriſt till he have grace. Natural men may in their way be fond of Chriſt, as a meer ſuperſtitious Papiſt that reverences his Picture: But no na-

tural

natural men can know his excellencies by ſound knowledg and experience. As Children may be fond of a piece of Gold, but know not the worth of it. It is grace that teacheth a man to ſay, *my beloved is the chiefeſt of ten thouſand.*

4. Grace makes a man abound in wiſhes to be liker and lik er Chriſt, in his ſpirit and temper of mind: in his humility, and obedience to his Father, and in his Praying; *Lord teach us to pray*, ſay the Diſciples; grace doth make a man like Chriſt, and makes him ſeek to be liker: for it is *from his fulneſs that we receive, and grace for grace.* Phil. 2. 5. Luc. 11. 1. John 1. 16.

Now tho no man doth attain to perfection in theſe things; yet every man that hath grace, follows after perfection: *Not that I have already attained, but I follow after.* Phil. 2. 12.

CHAP. XXXV.

Sheweth the opinion which many men have of their own Merits. From the whole 29 Verſe.

And he anſwering, ſaid to his Father, Lo, theſe many years do I ſerve thee, neither tranſgreſſed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gaveſt me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.

HERE the elder Son hath the confidence to tell his Father of his exact ſervices, and the reward he expected upon that account. Whence we may obſerve,

Doct. That the conceit which natural men have of their own Righteouſneſs, eſpecially Moraliſts, and ſeemingly religious men, ſwel up to the opinion of Merit.

T is was the ſpirit of the *Jews* of old; *wherefore have we faſted, and thou ſeeſt not? wherefore have we afflicted our ſoul, and thou takeſt no knowledg?* They ſpeak, as thinking they had deſerved better of God. Such men kiſs their hands to their own Righteouſneſs and Works, as *Job* ſpeaks the practice of Idolaters. Every man naturally hath a Pope in his belly; ſomething of his own to commend him to God, and let him into Heaven: *Good maſter, what good thing ſhall I do that I may* Iſa. 58. 3. Job 31. 27.

have eternal life? I will not have Heaven gratis, ſaid a *Roman-Catholick*. *Give me that eternal life which thou oweſt me,* ſaid another. We find in that Parable of the Vinyard, that the firſt labourers in the Vinyard, (which were the *Jews*) quarrelled with God, that their pay was no more; It is plain that *Iſrael* ſought Righteouſneſs by the works of the Law: And the *Rhem.* Annotations on Heb. 6. 10. *God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love*; Say, That God ſhould be unjuſt, if he ſhould not give men Heaven for their good works; and that for their good works they are worthy of eternal life.

Matth. 20.

Rom. 9. 32.

Bellarmine, the Church of *Romes* great Champion, taught, That a man had a double right to the Kingdom of Heaven: Partly, by his own merits; and partly, by the merits of Chriſt; Tho when he came to dye, he altered his mind. The Elders of the *Jews* tell Jeſus, that the Centurion was *worthy*, though himſelf thought not ſo, *I am not worthy that thou ſhouldſt come under my roof*: and *I am not worthy to come to thee.*

Luc. 7. 4, 7.

Reaſ. 1. Now the Reaſon of this conceit in natural men, is their pride: Man is a proud creature, one of the ſons of pride: He is eaſily puffed up with fancies of his own excellencies: *We have heard of the pride of Moab, he is exceeding proud; his loftineſs, and his arrogancy, and the haughtineſs of his heart.* The Apoſtle ſpeaks of *imaginations and high thoughts in man, that exalt themſelves againſt God.*

Job 41. 34.
Jer. 48. 29.
2 Cor. 10. 5.

Naturally man would not own ſubjection to God: Man looked upon his firſt eſtate as below him; as the Angels that fell, did; and therefore ſought a higher; Something of this will ſometimes ſurprize the beſt men: ſo *Hezekiah* was fain to humble himſelf for *the pride of his heart*; and *Paul* had a *thorn in the fleſh, leſt he ſhould be exalted above meaſure.* And therefore God is fain to take many courſes to hide pride from man.

Exod. 5. 2.
Gen. 3.
2 Chro. 32. 26.
2 Cor. 12. 8.
Job 33. 17.

Reaſ. 2. Another Reaſon of this conceit of merit in natural men, is, their ignorance of their ſinful nature, and the ſinfulneſs of their beſt works; They ſee not that ſelf, that hypocriſie that is in them; they obſerve not how little God is, either in the beginning or end of their beſt works, *Thou ſaidſt, I am rich; and knowſt not that thou art poor.* Thoſe *Jews* knew not, or would not know, that they had deſpiſed

Rev. 3. 17.
Mal. 1, 6, 7.

Gods

Gods name, and polluted it: *Wherein have we despised thy name?* and *wherein have we polluted thee?* There are many things which are highly esteemed of men; many of their own works, which yet *are an abomination in the sight of God.* The *Jews* had soaring, self-blessing thoughts of their multitude of Sacrifices. Doubtless their opinion was, that God was beholden to them on this account, and did them not right, that he took no more notice of them; and rewarded them no better; when as alas; God called them *vain oblations*, and *their incense was an abomination to him*; he could not away with their *solemn meetings*, they were *iniquity*; his *soul hated their new moons*; they were a trouble to him, he was weary to bear them. Luke 16. 15. Isa. 1. 11, 12.

Reas. 3. A third Reason why they especially of the Church of *Rome* hold up the Doctrine of Merit, is, because it is to their profit; it brings them in great Revenues: It's a rich and wealthy Doctrine: They have an art of making Silver and Gold with it more effectually than ever any Alchymist could do with the Philosophers stone. And besides, they uphold other Doctrines of their Church by this: This, and that of Venial sins, and that Concupiscence is not sin in the Regenerate; and many more; as stones in an Arch uphold one another.

USE First, Let this make you very cautious against this infection, conceit of meriting of God by the good you do: Christ is much wronged this way; merit becomes not the mouth, no, nor the thoughts of a creature; no creature can merit of God, neither Saints nor Angels: There is but one that merits, as there is but one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Adam could not have merited of God if he had stood in his Innocency, for he had done but his duty: What had he that he received not? And for him to think of merit, would have been to have gloried in what he received, as tho he received it not: Should the holy Angels have a thought of merit, it would stain their glory, and change them into Devils. 1 Cor. 4. 7. 1 Tim. 3. 6.

Those glorified creatures cast down their Crowns before the Throne of God with this language, *Thou art worthy*, Thou, and not we, *to receive glory, and honour, and power.* And can there be merit on earth, when there is none in Heaven? Rev. 4. 10, 11.

To speak of the creatures meriting of God, as it is a proud, so a most absurd Doctrine. Where is the man that hath Gospel-

ſpel-Grace, but abhors the thoughts of merit? He knows by experience, that there is no more place for this now, than when he was in a graceleſs ſtate. He knows that he never doth above his duty, but under it. He knows that he gives God nothing but what is his own: When *David* and his people offered ſo largely, he ſaith, *Of thine own, O Lord, have we given thee. We are not ſufficient of our ſelves, as of our ſelves, to think any thing, all our ſufficiency is of God.*

1 Chr. 29. 14.

2 Cor. 3. 5.

If we can merit of God, why do we pray daily for our daily bread? Beggars merit not their alms.

How much Scripture doth the Doctrine of merit outface? *I reckon that the ſufferings of this preſent life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in us.* What are *light afflictions for a moment, when compared with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Doth the maſter thank his ſervant for doing what he was commanded? I trow not; ſo ye, when ye ſhall have done all that is commanded you, ſay, We are unprofitable ſervants.* So St. *Paul, Who hath firſt given to him, and it ſhall be recompenced to him again?* For of him, and to him, and through him are all things, to him be Glory for ever. So the ſame Apoſtle, *By grace are you ſaved through faith, and that not of your ſelves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt.* And of himſelf and his own righteouſneſs, he ſaith thus, *That I may be found in him*, that is, in Chriſt, *not having mine own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt.* But the time would fail me, as the Apoſtle ſaith in another caſe, to tell you all the Scriptures ſay againſt mans meriting of God. Take only theſe few obſervations further.

Rom. 8. 18

2 Cor. 4. 17.

Luc. 17. 10.

Rom. 11. 35, 36

Eph. 2. 8, 9.

Philip 3. 9.

1. Obſerve upon what terms the Seed of *Abraham* became the Lords people, above all other people. *The Lord thy God hath choſen thee to be a ſpecial people to himſelf*; but why? *The Lord did not ſet his love upon you, nor chooſe you, becauſe ye were more than other people, for ye were the feweſt of all people; but becauſe the Lord loved you:* It was an act of free Grace in God to make them his People. And obſerve alſo, upon what terms they poſſeſſed the Land of *Canaan. Speak not in thy heart, ſaying, for my righteouſneſs the Lord hath brought me in to poſſeſs this land: no, not for thy righteouſneſs, or the uprightneſs of thy heart; for thou art a ſtiff-necked people.*

Deut. 7. 6, 7.

Deut. 9. 4, 5.

2. Con-

2. Conſider, that the beſt of men are not their own, but are *bought with a price.* Now if thou art not thy own, how can any thing thou haſt, be thine own to make money of it? 1 Cor. 6. 20.

3. If we make God our debtor, why did our Lord Jeſus Chriſt order us in our daily prayers, to beg of God to forgive us our debts? If the People of God may merit by their own righteouſneſs, why do they diſclaim it, *as filthy rags*? and why do they need a high Prieſt *to bear the iniquities of their holy things?* And why do they need the *Incenſe* of the Angel of the Covenant *to mix with their prayers*, when offered to God? Matth. 6. Iſ. 64. 6. Heb 2. 17. Rev. 8. 3, 4.

4. If merit carries it with God, why then do the beſt and worſt fare alike in this life? *All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked.* Yea, why do the worſt fare beſt, ſometimes, and the beſt worſt? The worſt have *more than heart can wiſh* in their Life, and have *no bands in their death*; and the beſt are *ſcourged all the day long.* Eccl. 9. 2. Pſalm 73.

5. The merit of man makes Jeſus Chriſt but half a Saviour, his title to Salvation to be partly from his own merits, and partly from Chriſts; as *Bellarmine* aſſerted, till he was fain to lay down his weapons, and forced to let the argument fall, and retract. Thoſe very Fathers that the Papiſts cry up for themſelves, are againſt them in this point; eſpecially St. *Auguſtine*, who was a ſtout defender of Grace, againſt the pride of nature in man, and the opinion of his own merits.

But beſides the Fathers, they are againſt themſelves; *Bellarmine* againſt *Bellarmine*, *Propter incertitudinem propriæ Juſtitiæ, & periculum humanæ gloriæ; tutiſſimum eſt*, &c. In regard of the uncertainty of mans own righteouſneſs, and the danger of boaſting, it is the ſafeſt way to put all our truſt in the Mercy of God, and Merits of Chriſt. And another of them confeſſeth, that the purchaſe of Chriſt, and merit of man, is a contradiction. De Juſtif. lib. 5. c. 7.

6. Conſider, That man cannot add any thing to Gods advantage or happineſs, by all the good he doth: *Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable to himſelf? Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makeſt thy way perfect?* It is a Condeſcention in God to take pleaſure in his Saints, not only on Earth, but in Heaven, where they have no ſin. Chriſt obligeth him, and his

Promiſe

Promiſe obligeth him, but there is not any thing in man that can oblige him.

7. All the good any man doth, is duty, and debt to God; and how can the payment of debts, merit?

Luke 17 10.

It is true, Creditors may take what they pleaſe of their debt, the one half for all. But where did God ever ſay he would thus compound with his Creatures? God ſtands as ſtrictly in his Goſpel-Covenant to have the whole debt paid, as he did in the Covenant of Works. Only he is content in the ſecond Covenant to take payment of Chriſt our ſurety, who is therefore called the *ſurety of a better covenant.*

Heb. 7. 22.

Obj. The Patrons of this Doctrine of merit, urge that Parable, *Bleſſed are thoſe ſervants, whom when their Lord cometh, he ſhall find watching; verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall gird himſelf, and make them to ſit down to meat, and will come forth and ſerve them.*

Luc. 12. 37.

Anſ. I anſwer, That this is an act of Grace, and not of debt. It is a point of Honour, and not Merit; as, Lo, thus ſhall it be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour. *This honour have all his Saints.*

Pſal. 149. 9.

Obj. But the Scriptures ſpeak of a *reward, In keeping of them* (thy commandments) *there is great reward. Verily there is a reward for the righteous. Great is your reward in heaven. Anſ.* It is a *reward* of Grace, and not of Debt. That which our Saviour, *Matth.* 5. 46. calls *reward*; in *Luk.* 6. 32. he calls *grace* or *favour.*

Pſal. 19. 11.

Pſal. 58. 11.

Obj. But they ſay further, That *Merit* and *Reward*, are *Relatives*, and therefore the one ſuppoſeth the other, as a Son ſuppoſeth a Father.

Anſ. I anſwer, That God is pleaſed to call Heaven our *Reward*, in relation to the Merits of Chriſt, and to his Promiſe; by both which he hath obliged himſelf; but in relation to us, it is called, *The gift of God.*

Obj. But Chriſt calls men into Heaven at the laſt, upon the account of their Works, *Matth.* 25. 34. *Come ye bleſſed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you: for I was an hungry, and ye fed me; thirſty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye cloathed me,* &c.

Anſ. I anſwer, 1. He will reward men *according* to their works, but not *for them.* As in our Juſtification we are ſaid to be juſtified

ſtified by Faith, or through Faith, but never for our Faith: So men ſhall be judged according to their Works, but not for them. Good works have a place of *Order* in mens Salvation, but not of *Cauſality*.

2. Chriſt ſaith, *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* He ſaith not, Inherit the Kingdom which ye have merited: but which my Father hath prepared for you. God may ſay to thoſe, who bid their own Works and Righteouſneſs for Heaven, as the Prophet of himſelf, *A goodly price do they value Heaven at!* Zach. 11. 13. a poor Heaven that is worth no more than their works. Men may merit their damnation: *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf*; but not their Salvation. Hoſ. 13. 9.

Obj. But ſome may further urge that in Rev. 3. 4. *They ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

Anſ. 1. They judg not themſelves worthy: *I am not worthy to bear his ſhooes*, ſaith *John* the Baptiſt of Chriſt. *I am not worthy thou ſhouldſt come under my roof*, ſaith the *Centurion*, a man of great Faith. Matth. 3. 11. Luc. 7. 6, 7.

2. As it is ſpoken by Chriſt, it is a word of Honour, as in 1 *Sam.* 1. 5. Not of Merit and Juſtice.

3. If they be worthy, it is by Chriſts righteouſneſs, and not their own: *We are made the righteouſneſs of God in him.* 2 Cor. 5. 21.

8*ly*, Amongſt many evils that follow the Doctrine of mans meriting of God, obſerve theſe two,

1. It keeps men from being humble. Thoſe that embrace it, will never be low and vile in their own eyes; they will never call themſelves *duſt and aſhes*, as *Abraham* did, *nor abhor themſelves in duſt and aſhes*, as *Job* did; nor cry out, *I am vile*, as he did; nor repute themſelves *leſs than the leaſt of all Saints*, as *Paul* did; nor cry out as he did, *O wretched man that I am!* Gen. 18. 27. Job 24. 6. and 40. 4. Eph. 3. 8. Rom. 7. 24. Jam. 4. 6. Now God looks on ſuch as his great enemies: *He reſiſts the proud.* They are not capable of Grace: *He giveth grace to the humble. Intus exiſtens prohibet alienum.* A proud heart is no more capable of Grace, than a veſſel full of Water, is to receive Wine.

2. The Doctrine of Merit deſtroys the free-grace of God, and brings in another Goſpel, as the *Galatians* did, who were for juſtification by the works of the Law. *If it be of works*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *then it is no more grace.* And ſurely Devils may be ſaved as ſoon as ſuch men, that overthrow the free-grace of God: *By grace ye are ſaved; not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt.* Gal. 1. Rom. 11. 6. Eph. 2. 8, 9.

But doth the Doctrine of free-grace deſtroy good Works? *Queſt.*

Anſ. No, it eſtabliſheth them, as the Apoſtle ſaid of Faith: *Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we eſtabliſh the law.* None more obſervant of the Law, than Believers; and none more abounding in good works, than thoſe who live in the ſenſe of free-Grace. They know they are choſen that they *ſhould be holy.* And that they are redeemed, that they ſhould be *zealous of good works.* And that they are *the workmanſhip of God, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, that they ſhould walk in them.* Free-Grace lets them into Heaven, and their good wooks follow them.

Rom. 3 31. Eph. 1. 4 Titus 2. 14 Eph. 2. 10. Rev. 14. 13.

Tho no man be ſaved for his holineſs, yet no man can be ſaved without it. You ſhould be as zealous of good works, as if you were to be ſaved by them; and yet impute nothing to them, as to the Merit of Salvation. To work in obedience to God, and ſo in order to Salvation, is your duty: but the purchaſe of Salvation is Chriſts Merit and Bounty: *It is the gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Tho your good and holy Works do not merit, yet they are neceſſary for good uſes: tho they do not merit, yet they are not in vain; but of great conſequence: *Wherefore, my brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know your labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Heb. 12. 14. Rom. 6. 23. Titus 3. 14. 1 Cor. 15. 58.

God is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him. But the reward is of Promiſe, not of Debt, further then his Promiſe makes him a Debtor to his People. And therefore let us be humble in the thoughts of our beſt works. Let us ſtill *walk humbly with God.* If he ſhould *mark iniquity, who ſhould ſtand?* We need Gods Attribute of Mercy when we are at beſt. All that are acquainted with the *ſin that dwelleth in them,* with the *fleſh that luſteth againſt the ſpirit,* with the *law in the members, that warreth againſt the law of their mind,* with the *iniquities of their holy things,* with the deceitfulneſs, and hardneſs, and ſelfiſhneſs of their hearts, with their *envying at the proſperity of the wicked,* and diſcontent at their own condition; with their frequent diſtruſt of God, and their dull affections to Jeſus Chriſt, and thoſe many and daily infirmities in their hearts and lives: Let them tell us, if they can, what room or reaſon there is left in them for Merit? and whether they have not need of Chriſt when they are at beſt? And of ſparing Mercy when they have done all? As well as *Nehemiah, Remember me, O my God, concerning this alſo, and ſpare me according to the greatneſs of thy mercy.*

Heb. 11. 6. Mich. 6. 8. Pſal. 30. 3. Rom. 7 16. Gal 5. 17. Rom. 7. 23. Neh. 13. 21.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Sheweth, How much it is in the nature of man, to find fault with God. From part of the 29, *and* 30. *Verſes.*

Thou never gaveſt me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as ſoon as this thy ſon was come, which hath devoured thy Living with harlots, thou haſt killed for him the fatted Calf.

SEE here the baſe Reflections of this man; how full of quarrel with his Father, with whom he finds fault, for his underdoing to himſelf, and over-doing to his younger Brother? Whence we learn,

Doct. That it is the nature of man to find fault and quarrel with God about his Diſpenſations. This ill Diſpoſition hath appeared in man ever ſince the fall.

We may ſee it in the *Jews*, from their beginning to their end, of whom this elder Son was the Repreſentative.

They chide with God in the wilderneſs; not only with *Moſes*, but with the Lord. Therefore the place where they did it, was named *Meribah*, that is, chiding, or ſtrife; becauſe of the chiding of the Children of *Iſrael*, and becauſe they tempted the Lord, ſaying, *Is the Lord amongſt us, or not?* They charged it upon the Lord, *Ez.* 18. that his ways were not equal; In ſo much, as he was fain to prove the Juſtice of his actions, both in this Chap. and chap. 33. *Are not my ways equal?* Whoſe ways can be equal, if mine be not? Exod. 7. 17. Ez. 18. 25.

They found fault with his Worſhip and Service, as unprofitable, *What is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit have we, if we ſhall pray unto him? Since we left off to burn incenſe to the Queen of Heaven, we have wanted all things.* Jer. 44. 18.

They would not own that God had ſhewed any love to them above other people: *Wherein haſt thou loved us?* Their late captivity ſtuck in their Stomachs, and bred hard thoughts in them of God; in ſo much as God was fain to prove that he had loved them: *Was not Eſau Jacobs brother? Yet I loved Jacob, and hated Eſau*: I have not loved *Eſau* as I did your Father *Jacob*. It is true, you went into Captivity: but I have returned you again to your own countrey: but I have not done ſo by *Eſau's* poſterity: *O Idumea, I will make thee moſt deſolate.* In the *Hebrew*, deſolation, and deſolation. I might abound in inſtances, but take only this one more. Mal. 1. 2. Ez. 35. 3, 7, 15.

They did ſo find fault with God and his ways, that they
Jer. 2. 11. chang'd him for other gods: *Hath a nation changed their*
Judg. 5. 8. *Gods? Which are yet no Gods. But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be aſtoniſhed ye heavens at this.*

And this is not only the ſpirit of the *Jews*, but it is every mans diſpoſition by nature, to find fault and quarrel with God.
Rom. 9. 18. 19. To quarrel his ſoveraignty, that he ſhould pick and chuſe the objects of his grace, as he pleaſeth; that he ſhould have mercy, on whom he will have mercy: *why doth he yet find fault, for who hath reſiſted his will?* Here men pick a quarrel with Gods freedom in beſtowing his ſaving grace; they cannot endure that he ſhould make this difference betwixt men and men, when as he found all alike in *Adam*.

Yea, they are ſo ſawcy, as to queſtion all Gods Attributes. As his Power; *can God prepare a table in the wilderneſs?* And his Mercy, Ezek. 33. 10. *We ſhall pine away in our ſins*: There is no relief for us in his mercy. In ſo much, that God was fain to ſwear againſt them herein, to clear himſelf: v. 11.
Matt. 20. 12. *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the*
1 Cor. 1. 25. *wicked; but that he turn from his wicked way, and live:* And
Rom. 3 14. ſo his Juſtice; *theſe laſt have wrought but one hour, and thou haſt*
2 Pet. 3. 4. *made them equal to us, who have born the heat of the day.* And his Wiſdom, As the wiſe *Gentiles* counted the Goſpel *the fooliſhneſs of God.* And his Truth; which made the Apoſtle ſo zealouſly aſſert it; *Let God be true, and every man a liar. Where*
Hoſ. 8. 12. *is the promiſe of his coming? ſay thoſe ſcoffers.* But why ſhould I
Jer. 44. 16. 17. go further in the proof of that which is ſeen every where?

And men do alſo find fault with the Laws of God. *I have written to him the great things of my Law, but they were counted as a ſtrange thing.* Men cannot bear Gods Legiſlative Power: *As for the word thou haſt ſpoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee, but we will certainly do whatſoever goeth forth out of our own mouth.* Man ſtrives with God for
Rom. 8. 7. Will. How impudently have the Church of Rome expunged the ſecond Commandment? And how many amongſt our ſelves have ſought to make void the fourth? Man by nature is an enemy to the Law of God: *he is not ſubject to the law of God,*
Pſal. 12. 4. *neither indeed can be.* He cannot, there is impotency; he will
2 Cor. 1. 23. not, there is impudency. Men would be their own Lords, and know no other: *Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?*

4. Men find fault, and quarrel at the Goſpel. It was and is *a ſtrumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs.* The Doctrine of Chriſt was ful of hard ſayings. And Chriſt himſelf

ſelf was deſpicable in their eyes: *Is not this the carpenters ſon? we will not have this man to reign over us. He came to his own and his own received him not*; his miracles, that ſhould have convinced them, that he was more than man theſe they refer to the power of the Devil, and not to the Power of God: *He caſteth out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils.* And notwithſtanding Gods Judgment on that Nation theſe 1600 years for their unbelief, they will not believe in him to this day. And the greateſt part of the world are ſtill infidels, 19. Parts of 31, as men of judgment compute. Self-denial, juſtificatoin by faith, and not by works, and the like, are Doctrines which natural men cannot down with, but abhor. John 6 16. Matt. 13, 54. Luc 19. 14. John 1. 11. Matth. 12. 24.

5. Men are prone to find fault with the Ordinances and Inſtituted worſhip of God. The *Jews* in the Old Teſtament left Gods Inſtitutions, and ſet up Altars of their own, and Images and high Places, and Groves: God complains much of them for it. And this was their ſpirit in Chriſts time: *In vain do they worſhip me, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men.* Matth. 15. 9.

6. Man is prone to find fault and quarrel with the Providence of God. Some of the Heathens have denied it in theſe ſublunary things, as being below him. And thoſe that own it, yet are offended at it; as that great man was, *This evil is of the Lord, what ſhould I wait for the Lord any longer?* 2 Kings 6. 33. Eccleſ. 7. 10.

It is uſual with men to quarrel at the preſent times, which the Preacher rebuked: *ſay not thou, what is the cauſe that the former days were better than theſe?* And it is common with us to quarrel with our conditions, comparing them with better, not with worſe. Many of the Angels thought their firſt eſtate below them; and ſo did man, and therefore aſpired to a higher. It is an eye-ſore to ſome men, that *there be juſt men, to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked: and wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.* Not conſidering, *that Gods judgments are a great deep* Many Providences have been an offence to the Godly themſelves. *Job* confeſſed, that he *uttered things that he underſtood not, things too wonderful for him, which he knew not* And *Jonah* was offended at Gods dealing with *Niniveh*; yea, about that trifle, his gourd. *Aſaph* was ſo diſſatisfied to ſee how matters went in his days, that he was tempted to look on Godlineſs as a vain thing, *Verily*, ſaith he, *I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chaſtned every morning.* And *Jeremiah*, tho he premiſed his perſwaſion of Gods Righteouſneſs, yet he would reaſon the caſe with God, *Wherefore doth the way of the wicked proſper?* Eccleſ. 8. 14. Pſal 36. 6. Job. 42. 3. Pſal. 73. 12, 14 Jer. 12. 1.

proſper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherouſly? But yet this was only a ſudden paſſion in them, a ſurprizal by a temptation, that went off preſently again, like the fit of an ague. Whereas it is the conſtitution of bad men, to think evil of Providence, when they do not ſpeak it out: neither do they rebuke themſelves in the ſin, nor mourn for it, nor ſtrive againſt it, as theſe ſervants of God did.

I come now to the reaſons of this Point.

Reaſ. 1. Prov. 13 10. Gen. 2. 17. Gen. 3. 1,5. Hab. 2. 5.

1. It is from mans pride; *through pride comes contention*, Contention and ſtrife with God, as well as with men. It was pride and aſpiring after great things, that made Angels and Men, at firſt, to fall out with God; and the Woman to believe the Serpent, rather than God. Pride makes men drunk with a ſort of mad diſcontent. *The proud is as he that tranſgreſſeth by wine*; and we know drunkards are quarrelſom.

Jam. 4. 2, 3. 2 Sam. 13. Numb. 11. Matth. 14. Matth. 20.

2. The luſt of man is the reaſon of his quarrelling with God: Men would have their luſts, and God croſſes them, *Ye luſt and have not, ye aſk and receive not, becauſe ye aſk, that ye may conſume it upon your luſts.* *Amnon* will have *Tamar*, and *Iſrael* will have fleſh, and *Herod* will have *Herodias*, and *Rachel* will have children, and *Zebedees* ſons will have honour: And when men luſt and have not, or if they have, and miſs of their expectation in that they have; this bloweth the coals of diſcontent and murmuring, even at God. Luſt muſt have much, and after all, is unſatiable. Bread from Heaven, and Water out of the Rock will not ſerve *Iſraels* luſts; but they muſt have Fleſh from Heaven too, and chide with God for it.

Numb. 11. 6.

3. Satan eggs and puts men on to find fault with God: He made *Eve* apprehend that God was too ſtrict with them, in forbidding them the fruit of the Tree of Knowledg of good and evil; and he uſed all his art to have provoked *Job* to have charged God fooliſhly; and he prevailed with *Adam* to charge his ſin on God; *The woman which thou gaveſt me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* As the Devil provoked *David* to number the people; ſo he provokes men to quarrel with God: He would bring men, if he could, to curſe God to his face, as he would have done by *Job*.

Job 1. and 2. 1 Chr. 21. 1.

Application. And let us all take heed of this unclean ſpirit: Man is a fooliſh creature in thinking to get any thing of God, by his peeviſh and froward ſpirit, *With the froward thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf froward*; or thou wilt wreſtle. We contend with

Pſal. 18. 26.

one

one infinitely above our match, if we contend with God: It would be a ſtrange world, and man would be a ſtrange creature, if he might be, or things might be after his mind. Let little children have their will, and they will eat traſh, and take knives into their hands, and play with fire, and any thing that would be hurtful to them: and thus would it be with man if he might have his will of God; he would do, as it is ſaid of that Prince; *Speak great words againſt the moſt high*, and he *would change times and laws*, ſtates and conditions, yea, Heaven and Earth, as they ſaid, *Come, let us build a tower that ſhall reach to heaven.* And as the Philoſopher wiſhed, That he were but one hour at the Sun, to ſee the nature of its body, tho he was burnt with it after: And *Pliny* would not be ſatisfied, till he went ſo far to ſee the cauſe of the fiery eruptions of *Veſuvius*, that he was ſmothered to death with it. Which ſhews the unrulineſs of humane appetites, which way ſoever they tend

Job 34. 33. Dan. 7. 25. Gen. 11.

We read in Scripture of murmuring for want, as *Iſrael* for Water, *Exod.* 15. 23, 24. And God is pleaſed to bear with this paſſion; he winked at this, as it is ſaid he did at the times of their ignorance. But then there is a murmuring out of wantonneſs; ſuch was *Iſraels* murmuring, becauſe they had no fleſh, and this God puniſhed ſeverely: Oh take heed of quarrelling with God from the ſuggeſtions of wantonneſs and luſt. Be ſure that your finding fault with Gods diſpenſations will be to your great prejudice, It is ſo great a ſin: it is the very ſcum and froth of a corrupt nature.

Acts 17. 30. Numb. 11. 6.

Remember our Saviours words, *mans life*, that is, the comfort of his life, *conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things that he poſſeſſeth.* This we ſee in *Haman*, *All this availeth me nothing.* A little that one righteous man hath, *is better than the treaſures of many wicked.* That a man ſhould eat and drink, and that his ſoul ſhould enjoy good in his labour, *This is the gift of God.* So that let a mans condition be never ſo low, he ſhould not be raſh and paſſionately eager, to raiſe himſelf to a higher. If God do it, he will teach you how to bear it, and uſe it. Stay till the Maſter of the Feaſt bids you ſit higher. And low thoughts of your ſelves will make you content with a low condition, and to condeſcend to men of a low eſtate. Chriſtians ſhould be more troubled at the littleneſs of Grace, than at the littleneſs of their outward condition, whether in reſpect of Wealth, Honour, or otherwiſe. Oh take heed of being offended at Gods diſpoſal of you: There are myſteries in Providence

Luke 12. 15. Eſt. 5. 14. Pſal. 37. 16. Eccl. 2. 2.

Rom. 9. 20

well as in the Scripture. Humane Reason is soon giddy with looking into the heigth and depth of Gods *unsearchable judg-*
Rom. 11. 33. *ments, and his ways which are past finding out.* It is arrogancy and folly in the highest degree, to measure the Infinite Wisdom of God, by the narrow reason of man. It is our great disadvantage, when we do not *know our selves to be but men,* and God
Psal. 9. 20. to be the Lord, to *whom secret things belong.* What would
Deut. 29. 29. you think of a man that should ask God, why he made him not an Angel? If you give way to finding fault with your present lot, it will rise to that at last; lust knows no limits. You know what a man he was, that said, *O that I were made judg in the land!*
2 Sam 15. There is need that God should at some seasons bring his people
1 Pet. 1. 6. into a low condition; as *Paul* needed a thorn in the flesh. A
2 Cor. 12. 8. skilful Musician sometimes brings his strings lower, when the Song requires it. And truly there are none of us, but may rather wonder at what we have, than at what we want, as *Jacob* did, *O God, I am less than the least of all the mercy, and*
Gen. 32. 10. *all the truth that thou hast shewed me.* How many would be glad of our leavings? If we murmur and complain, what may such do, who have much less than we have?

I shall close with a few words of advice.

1. Remember that our finding fault with Gods dispensations is much to our own damage; like the Arrows that 'tis said, *Cesar* caused to be shot at *Jupiter*, for a foul day, that hindred his intended march: these came short of Heaven, and fell down upon their own heads. So our quarrelling, whether in word or thought, at Gods Dispensations, they hurt him not at all, but they hurt our selves much: *Jonah* felt the smart of it.
Jonah 4.

2. In stead of complaining of God, complain to him; men may do this; humble complaint to God is not murmuring, if it were, there would be little room for prayer: Nay, Jesus
Matth. 27. 46. Christ had murmured, when he said, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? David* saith, *Psal* 142. *I poured out my complaint before him.* But a quarrelling spirit sowrs our duties, and callings, and relations, and every thing to us.

3. Never lay down the duties of prayer and praise; no con-
Heb. 4. 15. dition must hinder these: The Throne of Grace is set up for a *time of need.* And *Job* found place for praise in his greatest afflictions. And if you cannot at present, yet hope for a season to do it, *Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the*
Psal. 42. 11. *health of my countenance, and my God.*

FINIS.